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Va. Tech's Coleman Collins
and Duke's Lee Melchioni

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2005

Baghdad blasts kill 35 ahead of Shiite holiday

Five bombs target worshippers, police
on deadliest day since Jan. 30 elections

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AP photos

Above: A wounded man is treated at al-Yarmouk hospital after a suicide bomb blast Friday at the al-Khadimain mosque in the Dora neighborhood of Baghdad. Four explosions aimed at Shiite worshippers and one at a police checkpoint rocked Baghdad on Friday, killing at least 35 people and injuring dozens, officials said, on the eve of Shiite Islam's most important holiday of Ashoura. Left: Aqil, who wanted only to give his first name, cries in grief on the lid of his brother Abu-Zainab's coffin at the al-Yarmouk hospital. Abu-Zainab was a victim of a blast at the al-Khadimain mosque. Last year, 181 people were killed during a religious festival on the Ashoura holiday.

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

World

Thatcher's legal woes: Sir Mark Thatcher left court Friday expressing confidence he had cleared away suspicions he had any role in a failed coup plot featuring wealthy European financiers, soldiers of fortune and an African dictator-ship.

"It is patently clear that I had nothing to do with financing any coup in Equatorial Guinea," the only son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher told reporters outside a court in South Africa, his home since 1995.

North Korea energy supply: South Korea will start sending electricity across its heavily armed border next month to power a joint-venture industrial park in rival North Korea despite heightened nuclear tensions, officials said Friday.

Political tensions have overshadowed the venture's prospects after the North announced last week that it has nuclear weapons and is boycotting U.S.-sponsored disarmament talks aimed at quashing its nuclear ambitions.

On Friday, officials reaffirmed their commitment to the symbolic Kaesong project, saying the government-funded Korea Electric Power Corp. will start transmitting 15,000 kilowatts of electricity to the industrial complex in early March.

North Korea nuclear program: The United States and China agree that North Korea must end its nuclear ambitions and resolve the standoff through six-nation talks, Washington's top envoy on the issue said Friday, as efforts to restart the negotiations gained momentum.

Revising the stalled talks has taken on greater urgency since North Korea's explosive but unconfirmed declaration last week that it has become a nuclear power. The talks involve the two Koreas, the United States, China, Russia and Japan.

North Korea "has made a big mistake in developing these nuclear programs ... and we are to help them overcome this mistake," U.S. envoy Christopher Hill said in Seoul after a visit to Beijing on Thursday to meet with Chinese officials.

American nun's murder: Brazil's president ordered the creation of a huge Amazon rainforest protection area in a lawless region coveted by soy farmers and ranchers less than a week after an American nun was gunned down trying to protect the jungle from deforestation.

Decrees signed Thursday by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva will form a reserve of 8.2 million acres and a national park spanning 1.1 million acres in the eastern Amazon state of Para, where 73-year-old Dorothy Stang was shot to death in a dispute with a powerful rancher.

Fugitive war crimes suspect: The U.N. war crimes prosecutor said Thursday she has told the European Union that Croatia could arrest a fugitive suspect but doesn't want to—a claim that is certain to delay the start of the country's membership talks with the bloc.

In a letter to the EU presidency, leaked to the *Jutarnji list* daily, the chief prosecutor of the U.N. court, Carla Del Ponte, said Gen. Ante Gotovina, "is within reach of the Croatian authorities."

"The Croatian authorities simply have not done everything in their power to arrest Ante Gotovina, although they certainly have tried to give the impression that they are



Croatian politics: Croatian President Stjepan Mesic, right, shakes hands with Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko after Mesic's inauguration ceremony at St. Mark Square in Zagreb, Croatia, on Friday. Mesic vowed to spend his second five-year term pushing for Western-style democracy in Croatia and reconciliation with wartime adversaries in the Balkans. But Mesic, the most vocal opponent in Croatia of the U.S.-led war in Iraq, also indirectly criticized President Bush's policies, saying: "The menace of global terrorism hangs over our present-day world, accompanied by risks stemming from not always suitable methods being employed in the fight against this evil."

making the maximum effort," Del Ponte said in the letter.

Business

Ex-WorldCom chief's trial: The star witness against former WorldCom CEO Bernard Ebbers testified in New York on Thursday that a desire to meet Wall Street expectations eclipsed his own obligation to follow the law.

Scott Sullivan, who was finance chief under Ebbers, said he knew adjusting the books was illegal but did it anyway because "I thought we would make it through."

Weingarten spent more than eight hours questioning Sullivan in his attempt to convince jurors that Sullivan, not Ebbers, was behind the \$11 billion accounting fraud at WorldCom.

States

Private planes near Washington: Lawmakers from areas near the nation's capital have provided federal officials to reopen Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport to private planes since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks without success, so one senator introduced a bill Thursday to speed up the process.

"I've been patient," said Sen. George Allen, R-Va. "The point of the matter is, nothing has happened, and I find that unacceptable."

National Airport was once a major destination for private flights in and out of the capital region, and officials estimate the ban on general aviation is costing the industry \$50 million each year.

Robert Blake's murder trial: Robert Blake had his head in his hands and was moaning the night his wife was slain, a fire captain testified, saying the actor's behavior was normal for someone involved in a traumatic event.

Kevin Bailey, a 24-year veteran of the Los

Angeles Fire Department, whose team was first to respond to the report of an assault near Vitello's Restaurant on the night of May 4, 2001, said team members found Bonny Lee Bakley shot and Blake sitting on a curb.

Teen's banned yearbook photo: A hearing has been set for next month for a New Hampshire teenager suing to have his shotgun in his high school yearbook portrait.

Lawyer Penny Dean, who represents Blake Douglass and his family, said she requested a speedy hearing ahead of the April 15 deadline for the Londonderry High School yearbook.

The case is being heard in U.S. District Court, where earlier this week Judge Steven McAuliffe refused to delay publication until the case is decided. In denying the request, McAuliffe dealt a blow to Douglass' case by asserting that students, not school administrators, made the decision to exclude the photo, which shows Douglass holding a broken-open shotgun draped over his shoulder.

Military

Failed ballistic missile test: An experimental ballistic missile interceptor failed to launch during a test Monday because of a problem with the retracting arms that hold it erect in the silo, the senior U.S. military man said Thursday.

Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told members of Congress that a tiny switch controlling the arms had failed to close. The failure signaled that the arms had not come clear of the missile.

"They don't think that's a systemic issue, but it is one they are going to have to deal with, nevertheless," Myers told a hearing of the House Defense appropriations subcommittee.

The failed test was the second since December for the multibillion dollar national missile defense program.

Stories and photo from The Associated Press

Correction

A story in Friday's editions about training Iraqis misspelled the last name of Lt. Gen. David Petraeus.

Note to readers

Tom Philpott's column will not be published in today's editions. Starting on Feb. 24, the column will appear on the Your Money page.

At least 35 killed in pre-holiday bombings

BY PATRICK QUINN
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Five explosions shattered Shiite holiday commemorations in Iraq on Friday, killing at least 35 people, officials said, in the deadliest day of violence since Iraq's landmark elections last month.

Suicide bombers struck at two Shiite mosques after Friday prayers ended, another explosion occurred near a Shiite religious procession and a fourth attack, also carried out by a suicide bomber, blasted an Iraqi police and National Guard checkpoint in a Sunni neighborhood.

A fifth attack, a car bomb in the southern town of Iskandariyah, left at least seven people dead and 10 wounded outside a Shiite mosque, doctors said. The blast took place at about 7 p.m. in the predominantly Shiite town, 30 miles south of Baghdad.

The attacks recalled bombings on the Ashura holiday a year ago that killed at least 181 during the religious festival.

In northern Iraq, meanwhile, three American soldiers were killed in separate attacks on Wednesday and Thursday, the U.S. military said.

The bloodshed began when a bomber entered the vestibule of al-Khadimain mosque in the Iraqi capital's Doura neighborhood as worshippers inside knelt in prayer, then detonated his explosives, said a witness, Hussein Rahim Qasim.

Shortly afterward, a bomb exploded outside the al-Bayaa mosque in a predominantly Shiite neighborhood in western Baghdad.

The first explosion killed 15 and the second killed 10, an official at Baghdad's al-Yarmouk Hospital said on condition of anonymity. About 30 were wounded at both mosques.

Less than an hour later, an explosion near a religious procession of Shiites marking Ashura northwest of the city center killed two and injured five, according to Iraqi police Lt. Wad Hussein.

The fourth attack was at the checkpoint in northern Baghdad's neighborhood of al-Adamiyah. An Associated Press reporter at the scene saw one dead police officer and two wounded civilians.

Shiites packed into mosques Friday to mark the eve of Ashura, the 10th day of the Islamic holy month of Muharram and the holiest day of the year for them.

Ashura marks the death of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad, in a 7th century battle for leadership of the Islamic world.

The imam at al-Khadimain mosque used the minaret's loudspeakers to appeal for blood donations, said 1st Lt. Ahmad Ali,



A young boy stands outside a building damaged by an explosion near an Ashura procession in the Shiite Ash Shulah district of Baghdad on Friday. Four explosions aimed at Shiite worshippers ripped through Baghdad during Friday prayers, killing at least 28 people on the eve of Shiite Islam's holiday of Ashura.

who added that a suicide bomber was behind the blast.

Quick action from a security guard at the al-Bayaa mosque may have prevented more bloodshed. Amer Mayah said he opened fire on a man — apparently a second suicide attacker at the mosque — who was trying to get two grenades from his pocket, "and immediately he exploded."

There were no immediate claims of responsibility, but Iraqis blamed radical Sunni Muslims insurgents, who have staged car bombs, shootings and kidnappings to try to destabilize Iraq's reconstruction and provoke a sectarian civil war between Shiites and Sunnis.

One soldier was shot in Mosul in a small-arms attack Thursday, the military said. West of Mosul, a soldier was killed and another was wounded when a roadside bomb exploded while they were on patrol in Tal Afar, the military said.

Another assault in Mosul on Wednesday took the life of third U.S. soldier, who died in a car bomb attack while patrolling the volatile city. Three other soldiers were wounded in that blast.

The deadly explosions came as Iraq partially sealed its land borders as part of stepped up security on the eve of the holiday, hoping to avert a repeat of last year's bloodshed.

Land borders were partially closed from Friday to Tuesday, said Thair al-Naqeeb, a spokesman for the interim prime minister. Exceptions include trucks carrying food or oil. Baghdad's international airport will remain open for flights, al-Naqeeb and aviation industry officials said.

In the southern city of Karbala, where Ashura celebrations will be centered, police found the bodies of two police officers, both the sons of the chief of police of Najaf, another southern Shiite city, said Karbala police spokesman Rahman Mushawi. It was not clear who killed the two.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Thursday, at least 1,471 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,113 died as a result of hostile action, according to the Defense Department. The figures include four military civilians.

The AP count is 12 higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Thursday.

The British military has reported 86 deaths; Italy, 20; Ukraine, 18; Poland, 16; Spain, 11; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Latvia and Kazakhstan one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,333 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 1,004 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ One U.S. soldier was killed Wednesday by a car bomb while on patrol in Mosul, Iraq.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Army Pfc. David J. Branganman, 20, Lake Worth, Fla.; died Sunday in Uman, Iraq, when a mortar round struck his vehicle; assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga.

■ Army Sgt. Adam J. Plumondore, 22, Gresham, Ore.; died Wednesday in Mosul, Iraq, when a car bomb detonated near his vehicle; assigned to the 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, Wash.

■ Army Sgt. 1st Class David J. Salie, 34, Columbus, Ga.; died Monday in Baquba, Iraq, when his vehicle was hit by an explosive; assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Benning, Ga.

Noncombat deaths

February is on pace to surpass most recent months in the number of U.S. soldiers killed in noncombat accidents and other noncombat incidents.

U.S. military deaths in Iraq from vehicle accidents and other non-combat incidents



SOURCE: Defense Department

AP

Accidental military deaths in Iraq rising

BY ROBERT BURNS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. troops in Iraq have suffered a rash of fatal vehicle accidents and other noncombat deaths in recent weeks, even as the number killed in insurgent attacks has declined.

Although details of recent accidents have not been made public, some officials believe the jump in their number can be explained in part by turbulence from the troop rotation that is now approaching its peak, with tens of thousands of troops arriving and like numbers going home.

"The sheer volume of soldiers on the ground and high volume of vehicular traffic may reflect a

higher rate of individual accidents or nonbattle injuries," said Maj. Richard Goldenberg, spokesman for the 42nd Infantry Division of the New York Army National Guard, which is commanding a mixed Guard/regular Army task force responsible for an area of north-central Iraq.

There currently are about 155,000 U.S. troops in Iraq, according to the U.S. military command in Baghdad. That is the highest number of the entire war, including the initial invasion.

The number of troops is expected to drop to about 135,000 over the next month or two as units that complete their one-year tours of duty in Iraq pack up and head for home. Some were held

beyond their planned departure dates in order to provide extra security in advance of the Jan. 30 election.

In the first 16 days of February, there were 14 noncombat deaths, compared with 16 combat deaths.

January had the highest number of accidental or other nonhostile deaths for any month of the war, with 51. That included 30 Marines and one Navy corpsman killed in a single helicopter crash, on Jan. 26. Even setting that accident aside, the Army alone had 18 non-combat deaths in January, the most for any month of the war except August 2003, when it reported 22.

January also had 47 combat deaths, down from 57 in December and 125 in November.

Although U.S. deaths in insurgent attacks have declined the past two months, the number of attacks has not. The U.S. military command in Baghdad said Thursday that in the two weeks since the Jan. 30 election there have been 1,012 insurgent attacks, compared with 1,876 from Jan. 1-29.

The spike in nonhostile deaths in January and February coincides with the troop rotation, which began in small stages last fall but reached its peak over the past two months. The last time there was a notable increase in non-combat deaths was during the previous troop rotation — in February and March of 2004, according to Pentagon casualty statistics.

Army images of mock executions destroyed

BY LARRY NEUMEISTER

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Pictures of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan posing with hooded and bound detainees during mock executions were destroyed after the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq to avoid another public outrage, Army documents released Friday by the American Civil Liberties Union show.

The results of an Army probe of the photographs were among hundreds of pages of documents released after the ACLU obtained a federal court order in Manhattan to let it see documents about U.S. treatment of detainees around the world.

The ACLU said the probe shows the rippling effect of the

ACLU: Army documents show troops 'erased evidence' after Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq came to light

Abu Ghraib scandal and that efforts to humiliate the enemy might have been more widespread than thought.

"It's increasingly clear that members of the military were aware of the allegations of torture and that efforts were taken to erase evidence, to shut down investigations and to humiliate the detainees in an effort to silence them," ACLU Executive Director Anthony Romero said.

The Army did not immediately return a telephone message seeking comment.

The probe of the pictures in Afghanistan began after a CD found

there during a July office cleanup contained pictures of uniformed soldiers pointing guns at bound and hooded detainees.

The investigation showed that the pictures were taken in and around Fire Base Tycze in southern Afghanistan, according to the documents, which blacked out the identities of those interviewed.

An Army specialist told investigators that similar photographs were destroyed after images of torture at Abu Ghraib were leaked to the media.

Another Army specialist admitted he was photographed stand-

ing behind a prisoner while holding a weapon to his head, according to the released records. The specialist told investigators he considered those kinds of pictures bad because they would enrage the public.

The probe established probable cause to believe eight soldiers committed dereliction of duty when they jokingly pointed weapons at bound detainees and took pictures, the Army records show.

Earlier documents released by the ACLU had primarily been from the FBI. The ACLU also is seeking documents from the CIA and the Department of Defense.

Other Army documents released Friday outlined the case of an Iraqi detainee who said Americans in civilian clothes beat him, dislocated his arms, fired an unloaded pistol into his mouth and beat his leg with a bat before making him denounce his abuse claims to win release. A criminal file on the alleged abuse was closed because the probe could not prove or disprove the claims.

The Army documents also describe a probe into complaints by U.S. military personnel and special operations officers in Afghanistan that they saw assaults by special forces on civilians during raids in May 2004 in the villages of Gurjay and Sulhagen.

That investigation was suspended because the victims could not be interviewed and prospective witnesses were enemy forces, the Army said in its documents.

Smashing the insurgency's assets



Capt. Chris Hossfield of 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment smashes a window with his rifle before setting fire to a car in Mosul, Iraq, on Friday. Soldiers set fire to two cars that had been used to shoot at U.S. and Iraqi forces. A cache of weapons had also been found inside the other car.

Mud-wrestling soldier who bared her chest to be kicked out of Army, grandmother says

BY ESTES THOMPSON

The Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — A military police private who bared her breasts during a mud-wrestling party at an Army camp in Iraq is being kicked out of the service, her grandmother said Friday.

Luci Tomlin said 19-year-old Pfc. Deanna Allen was being singled out since photos of the event were published earlier this month.

"She got caught up in the moment and didn't realize the repercussions," Tomlin said from her home in Black Mountain, in western North Carolina.

Allen was initially demoted from specialist to private first class after the photos surfaced from the party at the Camp Bucca detention center in Iraq, including one of her lifting her shirt and showing her chest.

The party was held Oct. 30, as Allen's Asheville-based 105th Military Police Battalion took over duty from the 160th Military Police Battalion of Tallahassee, Florida.

"The 160th Battalion were the ones that threw the party and encouraged the girls to do this," Tomlin said. "It has been so hard. This isn't what she wanted."

Tomlin, who lives with Allen's parents and sister, said her granddaughter will be brought to Fort Bragg for processing before being released from the military. She was not sure of a schedule.

Maj. Richard Patterson, a spokesman for the 18th Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, confirmed Allen "will be coming to Fort Bragg" but declined to comment on whether she was being ousted.

Allen said in an e-mail she was being separated from the military.

"I am fine," said the e-mail, sent to the New York Daily News and reported by the paper Friday. "I am being chaptered out of the military, though. Be home soon."

The Daily News published party photos, including images of women wrestling in bras and panties in front of a crowd of male soldiers.

Pfc. England gets new set of reduced charges for role in Iraq abuses

BY JOSH WHITE

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Military prosecutors have filed a new set of charges against Pfc. Lynndie England that significantly reduces the Army reservist's potential prison sentence should she be convicted of detainee abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

England, who became a central figure in the scandal because she appeared in some of the most notorious photographs of mistreatment, now faces a maximum of 16½ years in prison on nine criminal counts, according to members of her defense team. According to the new charge sheets, nearly half of the alleged offenses stem from two single

photographs of England that became instant icons: One taken on Oct. 23, 2003, which shows her holding a detainee by a leash, and one on Nov. 7, 2003, in which she is seen posing with detainees arranged in a human pyramid.

Prosecutors at Fort Hood in Texas filed the new charges on Friday, several weeks after England's initial charges were dropped outright so her case could be transferred from Fort Bragg in North Carolina. The original charges carried a maximum of nearly 30 years in prison, according to England's lawyers.

England now stands accused of two counts of conspiracy, one count of dereliction of duty, four counts of cruelty and maltreatment of detainees and two counts of "indecent acts." Allegations of assault were dropped.

Much of the prison time England faces centers on two so-called indecent acts, one that

involved a photograph of the young soldier pointing at the genitals of naked detainees and the other capturing

an unusual sexual act with Spc. Charles Graner in a

spare cell at the prison, just outside Baghdad. Each charge carries a maximum of five years.

England's lawyer said the new charges bring her potential for prison time somewhat closer — but not yet in line with — the sentences imposed on those who have been convicted and sentenced in the scandal.

Graner was given 10 years; Sgt. Ivan Frederick got eight years.

"I think the charges more closely reflect what she's accused of doing,"

"I think the charges more closely reflect what she's accused of doing."

Richard Hernandez
England's attorney

"I think the charges more closely reflect what she's accused of doing; however, when you look at it proportionately to the others, she's definitely being charged with a heavier hand by the same prosecutors the others had," said Richard Hernandez, England's civilian defense lawyer. "It's because she's a woman, and it's because she became the face of this."

Because the earlier charges were dismissed, England is again entitled to a preliminary hearing in the military court system, a hearing that gives defense attorneys the opportunity to renew their call for high-level witnesses such as Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and top Army generals.



England

DOD unsure about maintaining Guard and Reserve in Iraq

BY ROBERT BURNS

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is unsure how long it can sustain the current pace of National Guard and Reserve deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, a senior official said Thursday.

"If we stress (the reservists) too much and have too many multiple call-ups, we're going to reach a point to where you would break," said Thomas Hall, the assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs.

"We're all looking at and trying to" determine where that point is, he added, "while at the same time hoping the world situation will change" and allow a reduction in U.S. forces in Iraq.

"But you sort of have to plan [as if] we had to continue at the present rate," Hall said. "Would that break us, or not? We believe we can sustain that. But could you sustain that for 10 years or 20 years or 30 years?"

Guard and Reserve soldiers currently account for about half of the 155,000 U.S. troops in Iraq, although Hall said plans call for reducing that substantially over the coming year or two.

In what some believe is a foreshadowing of deeper problems, the Army Guard and Reserve have been falling short of their recruiting goals in recent months. Hall, however, said he has been assured by the

Guard and Reserve chiefs that over the course of the year they will reach their targets with the help of 2,400 extra recruiters and large new signup bonuses.

In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noted "we're having some problem" in recruiting for the Guard and Reserve.

"I don't think we're at the point where this is a grave concern yet," Myers said. "It's just something we need to watch, as we go through this year."

Hall said there is no plan currently under consideration by him or Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to change the current policy of limiting Guard and Reserve mobilizations to 24 months.

Under that policy, for example, if a guardsman was called to active duty for six months following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to beef up security at a federal installation, and then was mobilized for 18 months for the Iraq war, he could not be called up a third time.

Technically, the Pentagon has presidential authority to mobilize the Guard and Reserve an unlimited number of times for Iraq or Afghanistan, so long as each mobilization is no longer than 24 consecutive months. Hall said Rumsfeld believes it would be unfair to the Guard and Reserve if the system were to force reservists to be players, to make them do more than 24 cumulative months.



MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

Florida National Guardsmen scan the Tigris river in June 2003. Hundreds and perhaps thousands of injured Army National Guard and Reserve soldiers have either lost or risked losing medical care and pay for months, according to a report released Thursday.

GAO report details loss of benefits for reservists

BY ANN SCOTT TYSON

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Hundreds and perhaps thousands of injured Army National Guard and Reserve soldiers — including many severely wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan — have either lost or risked losing medical care and thousands of dollars in pay for months because a "convoluted" personnel system dropped them from active-duty status, according to a Government Accountability Office report released Thursday.

The report found that over a two-month period early last year, almost 34 percent of the 867 soldiers whose records it examined were removed from active duty while their requests for medical extensions were snarled in bureaucracy, leaving many soldiers and their families to lose pay and benefits.

The Army does not track the numbers of injured and ill reservists suffering such gaps in pay and benefits, but with 16,000 reservists having passed through the military's "medical holdover" system since November 2003, and 3,400 there now, the total is "very possibly in the thousands," said Gregory D. Kutz, director of financial management and assurance at the GAO and author of the report.

Sgt. 1st Class John Allen, a weapons sergeant on a Special Forces A team, suffered brain trauma and injuries to his legs, torso and vision from a helicopter accident and grenade blast outside Kandahar, Afghanistan, in summer 2002. But it was not until Allen applied for an extension of his active-duty status in November that his "real

troubles started," he testified before the House Government Reform Committee yesterday.

While coping with his injuries, Allen was dropped repeatedly from active duty, losing a total of three months of benefits and \$11,924 in pay. In July 2003, Allen said he had to borrow \$10,000 from his brother to pay bills. The following month, his wife went into labor prematurely but was refused treatment at the hospital in Fort Bragg, N.C., until a senior Army commander intervened.

The "broken, dysfunctional system," Allen said, "placed my family under intense and indescribable stress."

Lacking what it called "reliable" Army records on the program, the GAO gathered its findings in audits at 10 Army installations across the country and in case studies of 10 soldiers. The soldiers had spent 17 to 122 days off active duty. Their missed pay ran from \$1,208 to \$13,475.

The main source of the problem, according to the GAO, Army officials and soldiers, was the obsolete Active Duty Medical Extension program, set up in July 2000 for reservists injured while on active duty or in training. The influx of wounded reservists from the Iraq war quickly overwhelmed the office, which had a staff of three people when it began receiving 25 to 30 cases for review every day in December 2003.

Army officials testified that a program instituted in May has resolved the automatic removal of reservists from active duty. But the GAO report said the program is also inefficient and has "in some respects worsened problems."

PBS sends out 'raw' and 'clean' versions of war documentary

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — At least two TV stations will show an uncensored documentary about soldiers in Iraq despite a warning from PBS that it can't insure stations against FCC fines stemming from bad language.

The public broadcaster is distributing "clean" and "raw" versions of next Tuesday's "Frontline" documentary about the Iraq war, titled "A Company of Soldiers."

The documentary contains 13 expletives spoken by soldiers. But "Frontline" producers also made a separate version with the words edited out, for use by some of PBS's 170 stations in more conservative parts of the country.

Instead, PBS decided to send the clean version out to all of its stations. The raw

version will also be made available, but station managers will have to make a special effort to tape it in advance.

KCTS general manager Randy Brinson told The Seattle Times on Thursday the station will show the unedited version Tuesday.

"Frontline" is produced by Boston's WGBH, which also will air the raw version.

PBS warned its stations that if they want to put themselves at risk of an FCC fine for language, the system can't insure them, said senior programming executive Jacoba Atlas. To air the raw version, stations must sign a statement acknowledging the financial risk is theirs.

"It's a financial decision," Atlas said. "It's not a decision that reflects on the merit that we think the film has."

European Union to start legal-training program in Baghdad, officials say

The Associated Press

BRUSSELS, Belgium — The European Union — narrowing the gap with Washington over Iraq — will open a Baghdad office to run a democracy-building program that will train hundreds of Iraqi judges and prosecutors, sources said Friday.

They said the EU foreign minis-

ters will announce the measure Monday, one day before President Bush holds his first day-long negotiations with European leaders at both the NATO and European Union head offices.

The EU plans to train more than 700 judges, prosecutors and prison guards outside Iraq.

It will make available \$3 million to provide security for the

Baghdad office that will recruit Iraqis.

The office itself will be provided by Britain and have a staff of about five.

Officials said the Baghdad office — the first EU representation in Iraq since the war — reflects Europe's willingness to take on a more active rebuilding role.

After two years of divisions

over the Iraq war, European diplomats said the Bush visit next week will open a new chapter in trans-Atlantic relationship.

In an off-the-record briefing with journalists Friday, one EU diplomat said the rebuilding and stabilization of Iraq was a common challenge for the United States and Europe.

The EU has remained aloof from Iraq due to opposition to the 2003 war, notably in France and Germany.

Last year, the NATO alliance became more active in Iraq by agreeing to help train Iraqi forces overseas.

NATO has 100 military personnel involved in that training mission.

New bonuses aim to lure more officers to reserves

\$6,000 being offered to active-duty officers, warrant officers for joining Guard, Reserve

BY LISA BURGESS

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Working to correct a shortfall of captains in the reserve components that predates the war on terror, the Army is offering incentive bonuses to the general warrant and officer corps for the first time in modern history.

Two new, lump-sum \$6,000 bonuses are now in effect: an "affiliation" bonus for active-duty officers and warrant officers to prompt them to sign up for service with National Guard or Army Reserve, and an "accessions" bonus for some newly commissioned officers if they are in a critical specialty or agree to re-train into one after joining the reserve components.

Congress authorized the bonuses in the 2005 defense budget, according to Col. Mark Patterson, Officer Division chief in the Army's Directorate of Military Personnel Management.

The accessions bonus is reserved for individuals to be commissioned as officers, including enlisted personnel in all Army components who are eligible for an officer commission.

To be eligible for the \$6,000 bonus, individuals must attend either Officer Candidate School, a college or university's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program without a scholarship, or receive a direct commission without attending either program.

The law prohibits the Army from giving the \$6,000 to new officers with ROTC scholarships or

West Point degrees. Receiving a bonus on top of a taxpayer-funded education would be "double-dipping," Patterson said in a Thursday interview in his Pentagon office.

To get the bonus, eligible officers or officer candidates must also agree to specialize in a branch the reserve components have defined as "critical," finish Officer Basic Course in that branch and commit to serving in a reserve unit for six years, Patterson said.

The new affiliation bonus is open to all ranks, Patterson said, but is primarily designed to encourage all warrant officers and branch officers in the ranks of major and below and who are leaving active duty to join the National Guard or Army Reserve for at least three years instead of going into the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR).

The Army's IRR is made up of are soldiers who still have a legal obligation to serve in the military reserves, as well as officers who have not reached their retirement or resigned their commissions. IRR soldiers can be called up in case of national emergency, but they do not drill on a regular basis.

Officers in the IRR who have never served in the National Guard or Army Reserve also are eligible for the \$6,000 affiliation bonus, Patterson said.

For information on the accession bonus, please contact your military personnel office for the Army National Guard or U.S. Army Reserve. For information on the affiliation bonus, contact a reserve component career counselor, available at all Army transition centers.

E-Mail Lisa Burgess at: burgessl@stripes.osd.mil



On Thursday, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld defended President Bush's proposal to cut Navy shipbuilding in the FY 2006 budget.

Bush's plan to slow Navy shipbuilding worries lawmakers

BY LIZ SIDOTI

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President George W. Bush's plan for the Navy calls for buying fewer ships, while China, a potential security hot spot, is increasing and repositioning its fleet. It's a prospect that concerns some U.S. lawmakers.

The plan is contained in Bush's 2006 budget proposal, which U.S. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld on Thursday defended, saying the military was closely watching China's moves but that the U.S. Navy remains the pre-eminent fleet.

"The United States Navy... is the Navy on the face of the Earth that is a true blue water navy," Rumsfeld told the Senate Armed Services Committee. "On the other hand, when one looks at trend lines, it is something that we have to think about."

The Pentagon says buying fewer ships than previously planned won't affect combat ability. Previous budgets envisioned purchasing six Virginia-class attack submarines, seven DDG destroyers and 10 San Antonio-class amphibious landing ships through 2011. The 2006 budget

calls for three submarines, five destroyers and nine landing ships. It also proposes eliminating one of the Navy's 12 aircraft carriers.

Republicans and Democrats argued that cutting back now could jeopardize the Navy's long-term domination of the seas, particularly in light of China's military improvements.

Lawmakers also worry that any reductions would cost them work and jobs at the nation's shipyards.

Republican Sen. Susan Collins, whose state of Maine is home to the Bath Iron Works, one of the Navy's largest shipbuilders, expressed her reservations to Rumsfeld.

"I recognize that our naval fleet still remains the most technologically advanced in the world. But the decreasing number of ships being procured, particularly in the light of the Chinese buildup, really concerns me," she said.

"Are you concerned about projections that the Chinese fleet may well surpass the American fleet in terms of numbers in just a decade's time?"

"Senator," Rumsfeld replied, "it is an issue that the department thinks about and is concerned about and is attentive to."

Draft would not improve quality of military, top Army recruiter says

The Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — A military draft would not improve the quality of soldier over the current all-volunteer force, a head of Army recruiting said Thursday.

Major Gen. Michael D. Rochelle, commanding general of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command at Fort Knox, said volunteer soldiers want to be a part of the military, making them "as wonderful a soldier as one can imagine."

"I think what we have today far surpasses a draft," he told a Rotary Club audience.

Rochelle, 54, oversees 7,000 Army recruiters worldwide and

has a \$250 million advertising budget with a goal of bringing in 80,000 new soldiers this year. It's a daunting task, he said.

A good economy and a falling unemployment rate mean fewer people are looking for jobs. "Recruiting is a challenge in the best of times," he said. "We're competing with industry."

Nevertheless, the Army expects to meet its recruiting goals for 2005, he said, noting the targeted recruiting age range — those between 17 and 24 — are "joiners" willing to serve.

"They're civic-minded," Rochelle said. "They recognize the threat very well that Sept. 11 poses."

Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, testified before the House Armed Services Committee on Wednesday he expects recruiting in 2005 to be "very challenging" for both active duty soldiers and reserves, particularly the Army Reserve.

"We are increasing the numbers of recruiters and restructuring enlistment bonuses to help mitigate these challenges," Myers told the congressional committee.

The Army is also partnering with business or municipal agencies by offering soldiers whose enlistments are completed "priority interviews" with companies taking part in the program, Rochelle said.

Homebuilder to pay \$1 billion for former Marine base bought in auction

The Associated Press

IRVINE, Calif. — A giant homebuilder won an online auction of a former Marine base, agreeing to pay \$1.05 billion for the Orange County tract once pegged for an airport.

Lennar Corp. will build 3,400 homes on part of the 3,718-acre site, and another section of the land is slated to become one of the nation's largest urban parks. The rest will be used for retail centers and industrial

parks, the Miami-based developer said.

The Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, began operations during World War II and was closed in 1959. Some local officials had wanted to use the land for an airport, but voters opted for the park in 2002.

The six-week online auction was the largest ever by the federal government in dollars and size — almost 6 square miles, officials said.

Lennar estimated its cost at \$1.2 million

per developable acre, which the developer's regional president, Emile Haddad, called market value.

The price included \$649.5 million for the base itself plus an additional \$400 million in fees that the city of 162,000 people will use to create the "Green Park." Park supporters say it will resemble San Francisco's Golden Gate Park or San Diego's Balboa Park, with a mix of open space, landscaped parkways, sports facilities and

cultural institutions.

The land has been saddled with questions about contamination by chemicals including the cancer-causing solvent trichloroethylene, which the Marines used for decades to clean aircraft.

Steve Scarborough, chief executive of Standard Pacific, the only other major bidder, noted concerns about whether the Navy would have enough money to complete its cleanup and whether more contamination could be discovered.

IN THE STATES

Bishops report 1,092 new claims of abuse

BY RACHEL ZOLL
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The nation's Roman Catholic bishops said Friday that over the last year they received 1,092 new allegations of sexual abuse against at least 756 Catholic priests and deacons.

Half of the accused priests over the past year had been previously accused of abuse, said Kathleen McChesney, executive director of the bishops' Office of Child and Youth Protection.

Most of the alleged incidents occurred decades ago: 72 percent of the priests were either dead, defrocked or removed from public ministry before the newest allegations were received, McChesney said.

The information came as the bishops released a new national

audit of U.S. dioceses to determine how well they've complied with the child protection policy American prelates instituted more than three years ago at the height of the clergy molestation crisis.

Teams of auditors, comprised mainly of former FBI agents, compiled data in visits to dioceses across the country.

The auditors found that more than 95 percent of dioceses have taken the required steps to keep children safe.

But the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests said the audits were "minimal and misleading," contending bishops had too much control over who participated in the review.

The report is the latest in a series of the bishops commissioned to restore trust in their leadership

after the clergy molestation crisis erupted in the Archdiocese of Boston and spread nationwide.

Last year, the bishops released an unprecedented statistical review that found 4,392 priests had been accused of molesting minors in 10,667 cases between 1950 and 2002.

A first series of audits, also released a year ago, found 90 percent of the 195 U.S. dioceses were fully compliant with the child protection policy the bishops adopted under intense public pressure in June 2002.

But auditors also found shortcomings in the reforms, such as ineffective monitoring of guilty priests.

The bishops have already authorized a third national audit this coming year, but reduced the number of dioceses that will receive full reviews.



President Bush gestures as he answers questions from the media in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building at the White House.

President promises to protect Israel from Iran

BY JENNIFER LOVEN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush criticized Syria and Iran as destabilizing forces in the Middle East but stopped short of threatening new U.S. action against either. Expressing sympathy with Israeli worries about a nuclear-armed Iran, the president said America would protect its ally.

Bush on Thursday said Syria was "out of step" with progress being made in the Mideast. The president cited the 15,000 troops that Syria has in Lebanon and accused Syria of harboring terrorist groups and assisting Iraq insurgents.

He did not assert involvement by Syria, as many suspect, in the assassination this week of a former Lebanese prime minister, Rafik Hariri.

"I'm going to withhold judgment until we find out what the facts are," Bush said at a news conference where he announced the appointment of John Negroponte, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, as director of national intelligence.

Going over one global hot spot after another, the president repeatedly chose the language of negotiation over intimidation.

He did say that "some of the behavior in the Mideast is unacceptable" — a reference to Iran's alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons and support by Iran and Syria of terrorist organizations.

But Bush emphasized diplomatic solutions. "There's a lot of progress that can be made," he said.

Bush dodged several questions about potential new penalties against Syria. "The idea is to continue to work with the world to remind Syria it's not in their interest to be isolated," he said.

His approach contrasted sharply with that recommended by a bipartisan group of 11 senators, who urged Bush to expand on trade penalties and to "take strong action" against Syria. "Neither the U.S. nor our allies can afford to let Syria off the hook," the lawmakers said in a letter Thursday.

Bush reaffirmed that Iran is not now in danger of a U.S. attack, despite the administration's belief that Tehran is developing nuclear weapons; Iran denies that charge. "There's more diplomacy, in my judgment, to be done," the president said.

Asked about his level of concern that Israel might attack Iran to prevent its Tehran from acquiring nuclear arms, Bush responded with an assurance to Israel of U.S. protection.

"If I was the leader of Israel and I'd listened to some of the statements by the Iranian ayatollahs that regarded the security of my country, I'd be concerned about Iran having a nuclear weapon as well," he said. "We will support Israel if her security is threatened."

Rehnquist to miss Supreme Court's arguments next week

BY HOPE YEN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Ailing Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist will be absent from the bench when the U.S. Supreme Court returns for the second half of its term next week, the court announced Friday.

The 80-year-old Rehnquist, battling thyroid cancer, plans to skip the two-week cycle of oral arguments that starts Tuesday, court spokeswoman Kathy Arberg said. He will continue reading transcripts of the arguments and voting on decisions, she said.

Rehnquist has been working mainly from home since Oct. 22, when he was hospitalized and then underwent a tracheotomy to help him breathe.

He made his first public appearance last month at the presidential inauguration, appearing frag-

ile as he delivered the oath of office.

Rehnquist's illness has led to speculation that he will step down, giving the court its first opening since 1994.

While such an announcement could come at any time, justices typically wait until the term ends in June to leave to avoid an extended vacancy and the possibility of 4-4 votes on cases.

The court resumes its term with two weeks of arguments featuring contentious issues such as property rights and display of the

Ten Commandments in government buildings. Some court watchers had suggested Rehnquist might try to sit for those arguments because he has a special interest in religious freedom and eminent domain cases.

He has reduced his workload during his cancer treatment. He is not participating in decisions from the dozen cases heard in November unless the remaining eight justices are deadlocked. He intends to take part in the December and January cases, relying on briefs and transcripts of the arguments.

Outside medical experts have said that, based on his treatment of chemotherapy and radiation, he may have an extremely aggressive kind of thyroid cancer.

Rehnquist celebrated his 33rd anniversary on the court last month and has been chief justice since 1986.



Rehnquist

Panel: Celebrex can remain available

WASHINGTON — Advisers to the Food and Drug Administration concluded Friday that the popular painkiller Celebrex poses an increased risk for heart problems but should be allowed to remain on the market.

The FDA's arthritis and drug safety advisory committees, concluding three days of meetings to assess the risks of three popular painkillers called Cox-2 inhibitors, were to address Vioxx and Bextra later in the day.

The advisers also were set to frame recommendations to the FDA about whether further testing is needed for the drugs and any special warnings or limits that should be placed on them.

Ex-Boeing exec gets four months in prison

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A former top executive at Boeing Co. was sentenced to four months in prison Friday for

illegally negotiating a \$250,000-a-year job for an Air Force procurement officer who was overseeing a potential multimillion-dollar contract for the company.

Michael Sears, 57, pleaded guilty in November to a single count of aiding and abetting illegal employment negotiations.

Specifically, Sears, who was chief financial officer of the aerospace giant until he was fired in 2003, negotiated to hire Darleen Druyun at the same time Druyun held sway over a contract sought by Boeing that was worth billions of dollars.

Cops: Suspect wanted L.A. train wreck

GLENDALE, Calif. — A man accused of killing 11 people by parking his truck in a train's path intended to get his estranged wife's attention by causing "a horrific tragedy," not to kill himself as originally thought, police say.

Authorities also said Juan Manuel Alvarez, told them

he had pumped gasoline on the SUV before the Metrolink struck it Jan. 26 as it carried commuters to downtown Los Angeles.

Bush signs bill to curb class-action suits

WASHINGTON — President Bush on Friday signed a bill that he says will curtail multimillion-dollar class action lawsuits against companies and help end "the lawsuit culture of our country."

The legislation aims to discourage class action lawsuits by having federal judges take them away from state courts. It was a victory for conservatives who hope it will lead to other lawsuit limits and for businesses that have complained for decades that state judges and juries have been too generous to plaintiffs.

The president has described class action suits, in which a single person or a small group can represent the interests of thousands in court, as often frivolous.

From The Associated Press

Texas execution

HUNTSVILLE, Texas — Condemned killer Dennis Wayne Bagwell had said he was looking forward to his execution and, once strapped to the death chamber gurney, wasted little time making certain the lethal injection was carried out quickly.

Bagwell muttered only a few words of appreciation and affection to four people he invited to attend his punishment Thursday evening for the slayings of his mother and three other relatives nearly 10 years ago near San Antonio.

"Thank you," he said. "I love you all. All right, warden, I'm ready."

He was the third Texas prisoner executed this year.

Stun gun suspension

TOLEDO, Ohio — Police have suspended their use of stun guns following the death of a suspect who had been shocked nine times.

Lucas County Sheriff James Telb said Wednesday the department will not use Tasers again until more safety studies are conducted.

He said his officers have used Tasers about a dozen times since they went into service last year.

Jeffrey Turner, 41, died last month after he was shocked five times by police and four times by guards at the jail. The coroner's office has not released a cause of death.

Family sues city

BALTIMORE — City officials who encouraged a Baltimore couple to report illegal drug activity didn't do enough to prevent a dealer from killing them and their five children in retribution, relatives claim in a \$14 million lawsuit.

The suit, filed Wednesday in Baltimore Circuit Court, accuses city and state officials of gross negligence for failing to protect Angela and Cornell Dawson and their children, who died in a 2002 arson fire at their home.

The city's "Believe" campaign encourages city residents to fight crime by reporting drug activity.

Terror plot charge

INDIANAPOLIS — Federal prosecutors have charged an Algerian man with making up an al-Qaida bomb plot in an effort to avoid being deported.

Abmed Allali, who was charged Wednesday, falsely claimed he knew members of the terrorist group and that he knew of a cell planning to detonate bombs in five major U.S. cities in early 2005, said Susan W. Brooks, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana.

Allali, who was ordered deported after entering the United States with a fraudulent passport in 1998, made up the story after his November arrest in Indianapolis on a deportation warrant, according to a probable cause affidavit. Late last year, Allali acknowledged he knew no one associated with a terrorist network, the affidavit said.

From The Associated Press

Cosby won't face abuse charges

BY MARYCLAIRE DALE

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Authorities found insufficient evidence to support a woman's claims that Bill Cosby fondled her at his suburban mansion after giving her medication that made her dizzy, a prosecutor said.

Cosby will not face charges stemming from the allegation by a former employee at Temple University, Cosby's alma mater, Montgomery County District Attorney Bruce L. Castor Jr. said in a statement Thursday.

The woman, who now lives in her native Ontario, told Canadian news last month that, after a night out with friends in January 2004, Cosby gave her medication that made her woozy, then fondled her. She said she later awoke to find her bra undone and her clothes in disarray.

Cosby, 67, a Temple alumnus and booster, has denied the allegations. In a statement Thursday, his lawyer said Cosby was gratified by the decision.

"Mr. Cosby looks forward to moving on with his life," attorney Walter M. Phillips Jr. said.

Castor has said that the accusations years ago delay in coming forward, and her contact with Cosby in the past year, weighed in the comedian's favor.

The prosecutor said he also reviewed claims by other people that Cosby had "behaved inappropriately" toward them, but that detectives could find no instance "where anyone complained to law enforcement of conduct which would constitute a criminal offense."

The woman's attorney, Dolores M. Troiani, called the evidence strong and said her client is likely to sue Cosby.



Cosby

"She felt, as we did, that it's a very strong case and that she was telling the truth and that Mr. Castor's opinion does not change the facts," Troiani said.

Troiani said her client gave prosecutors tapes of telephone calls between Cosby and the family that bolster her allegations.

The calls occurred after her client contacted police, the lawyer said.

Cosby's publicist, David Brokaw, declined comment Thursday on whether the comedian had any telephone contact with the family since the investigation began.

The long-married Cosby — best known as a warm, wisecracking TV dad — has provoked debate this past year with blunt remarks on personal responsibility aimed at the Black community. In 1997, the year his son Ennis was murdered, he acknowledged a brief affair with the mother of a young woman later convicted of extorting him.

It is the policy of The Associated Press not to publish names of alleged sexual assault victims without their consent.

The Hasty Pudding goes to ...

Actor Tim Robbins accepts troupe's Man of the Year award

BY NANCY RABINOWITZ

The Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Actor Tim Robbins pleaded, sang and faced off with protesters to earn the Hasty Pudding Man of the Year award.

Robbins, whose best-known roles include the wrongly convicted prisoner in "The Shawshank Redemption" and a quirky baseball pitcher in "Bull Durham," made his case Thursday to a "parole board" — a wooden board with "parole" written on it — and sang a version of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" with the lyrics rewritten for him.

The actor, known for his social activism, also had to deal with sign-toting protesters before members of the Harvard-based student drama troupe, dressed in drag, presented him with the bronze pudding pot.

Robbins' companion, actress Susan Sarandon, was crowned the Hasty Pudding Woman of the Year in 1996.

"She actually prepared me for a parade, so she talked mostly about a parade and I didn't end up getting a parade," Robbins said of the advice he got from Sarandon. "Next time, maybe after tonight, we'll have an impromptu parade, open air cars, get some of the guys in drag."

Robbins, 46, earned a best supporting actor Oscar last year for "Mystic River."

Actress Catherine Zeta-Jones received the Hasty Pudding Woman of the Year award last week.

Hasty Pudding Theatricals, the nation's oldest undergraduate drama troupe, gives the awards to performers who have made a "lasting and impressive contribution to the world of entertainment."

Last year's recipients were Sandra Bullock and Robert Downey Jr.



Actor Tim Robbins, center, dressed in a wig and a prison-striped bra, is kissed by actors dressed in drag Nicholas M. left, and Joe Bressi while being awarded Harvard University's Hasty Pudding Theatricals Man of the Year award in Cambridge, Mass., on Thursday.

Debate stirs shoe tossing at former DOD official

The Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Howard Dean, the newly minted leader of the Democratic Party, and former Pentagon adviser Richard Perle made clear their opposing views on the war in Iraq during a debate marred by a protester who tossed a shoe at Perle.

Perle had just started his comments Thursday when a protester threw a shoe at him before being dragged away, screaming, "Liar! Liar!"

Perle, a Pentagon official during the Reagan administration, was recently chairman of the Defense Policy Board. He was a major proponent of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, while Dean was among the war's most prominent opponents.

In his new role as chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Dean has stressed that Democrats are stronger than Republicans on defense.

"Defense is a lot broader than swaggering around saying you're going to kick Saddam's butt," Dean said Thursday.

Perle said the war in Iraq was justified based on the intelligence available at the time.

Dean also said the Bush administration has ignored the mounting threat in Iran and North Korea.

Perle had his own barbs, too. He began his opening comments in the 1½-hour debate by saying Democrats "looked at the Democratic Party and chose a physician to lead them."

Perle was forced by one of the questioners to recast a comment he made on Sept. 22, 2003, in which he predicted that within one year, there would be "a grand square in Baghdad named for President Bush."

But, Perle added, "I will be surprised yet again if we do not see a square in Baghdad named after this president."

Oregon slow to remove 'squaw' from maps



Olivia Wallulatun, left, and Colleen Raba of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, Ore. Wallulatun spent much of her life trying to forget the slur "squaw," which she heard as a child.

BY RUKMINI CALLIMACHI

The Associated Press

SISTERS, Ore. — The white children called her "Pocahontas." They called her a dumb Indian.

When they wanted to dig in, they called her "squaw" — a derogatory word for an American Indian woman and one that Olivia Wallulatun, 5, has spent much of her adulthood trying to forget.

It's especially hard to forget in Oregon, which according to the U.S. Geographical Names Board has more rivers, buttes, meadows, mountains and gulches named "squaw" than any other state in the nation.

There are at least 170 natural features named squaw here and 893 nationwide — and while tribal and government officials from coast to coast agree the word needs to go, their efforts to eradicate it from the U.S. map have met obstacles. In Oregon, many of the delays stem from disagreements among the tribes on the new names.

On a recent winter morning, Wallulatun crouched to touch the Squaw River running along the highway, along land her ancestors from one of Oregon's largest tribes ceded to white settlers. "This is a remind-

er," she said, her long black braids wrapped in other skin, as she looked at the green Squaw River sign, then quickly looked away.

"There are 170 visual reminders out there of this negativity," she said.

In 2001, Oregon joined five other states, including Minnesota, Montana, Maine, Oklahoma and South Dakota, in requiring that the word "squaw" be deleted from state maps.

Lawmakers set a deadline which came and went last month — and although six of the original squaw names in Oregon have successfully been changed, the majority remain.

In the decade since the first of the state laws went into effect in 1995, only 74 squaw place names of the original 967 across the nation have been changed — less than 8 percent of the total, said Roger Payne, executive secretary of the U.S. Geographic Names Board.

"The reason is pretty much this — there's really no one word to which everyone agrees it can be changed," said Payne, citing a survey of American Indian tribes conducted by the board which showed that although the majority wanted the squaw

name to go, few were in favor of changing it to a single alternative. Instead, they each wanted a word from their specific language, in order to preserve their cultural heritage.

In contrast, the U.S. Geographic Names board voted to universally replace derogatory references to blacks in 1963 and in 1974, did the same for land features that used a derogatory word for Japanese. Those changes were made within a year of the decision.

Oregon has no quick fix.

"Consensus takes time," said Senate Majority Leader Kate Brown, D-Portland, who was one of the original sponsors of the 2001 bill. She now supports a second piece of legislation that would give the tribes an extension.

After three years of intense debate, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs passed a resolution in 2004 approving a total of 42 possible words to replace squaw on the tribe's ancestral land in Oregon. The list consists of 15 words translated into the Wasco, Paiute and Shupatlin languages, the three languages spoken by the three distinct Warm Springs bands, which have been living together under one tribal roof since 1879.

Man moves diner back to its Conn. hometown

By CARA RUBINSKY

The Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. — After three decades and a 60-mile journey on a flatbed truck, a quaint piece of Americana is back home.

Developer Michael Haddad paid \$20,000 to load the 55-seat Windham Diner on a truck for a two-hour winding trip from Waterbury to a strip mall in Willimantic.

It's a homecoming for both the town and the diner, which was built in 1950 and operated in Willimantic until 1971, when it moved away. "A lot of old-timers came out this morning to take a look at it," Haddad said. "They are here in the '50s. I'm sure they have a lot of stories to tell."

Diners, once a mainstay of American dining, trace their history to the mid-19th century. While their popularity waned with the explosion of fast-food franchises, diners remain popular gathering places today, particularly in the Northeast.

The American Diner Museum in Providence, R.I., orchestrates two to three diner moves a year, but officials say most diners never return to their original towns. The museum saved about 25 diners from wrecking balls in the past decade.

"We're historic preservation-

ists, and we want to make sure these diners are preserved as much as we can," said museum spokesman Gregg Anderson. "You've got the police officer next to the doctor at a counter. It's the American gathering place. It's been that way for over a century."

Haddad said the Windham Diner had been owned by a distant relative — and he jumped at the chance to buy it for \$10,000, even though it had been shuttered for five years and was 60 miles away.

Moving the diner cost another \$20,000, and Haddad plans to spend \$50,000 renovating it. The diner lacks kitchen equipment but is furnished with the original booths, counters and stools.

Haddad owns a cafe in Chaplin, another small town in eastern Connecticut. He considered buying a diner in South Windham, about 3 miles from Willimantic, until the diner in Waterbury caught his eye while he browsed the Web site for the American Diner Museum.

He was sold when he realized the family connection.

"I thought, 'My God, why would I want to buy the South Windham Diner when I own the original Windham Diner?'" said Haddad, 56, a lifelong Willimantic resident who had never been to the diner.



Ron Ferg, a self-proclaimed environmental artist, makes his art made from grits in Columbia, S.C. The inspiration came to Ferg after one of his children overcooked a pot of grits, leaving them black, hard and destined for the garbage can.

Grits artist fashions unusual treasures

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — A bit of Southern inspiration came to artist Ron Ferg at the breakfast table.

One of his three teenage children had overcooked a pot of grits, leaving them black, hard and destined for the garbage can.

But Ferg saw art.

And so the 60-year-old self-proclaimed "environmental artist," who for years has used aluminum pans, plastic cups and peanut

hulls to make his art, found the medium he hopes launches him into the mainstream. Just call him the grits artist.

One room in Ferg's small house is filled with his grits art, including several vibrantly colored African masks and several portraits, including a quaint study of his great-grandparents standing outside a farm in a pose reminiscent of "American Gothic."

Ferg doesn't use grits straight from the pan. Instead he cooks them until they get hard, then he puts them in the oven and cooks

them again until they get really dry. Finally, he grinds them up and adds water to make a paste.

Ferg lives off a small military pension with his two teenage daughters and his son.

Before the grits art, Ferg's best-known work may have been dozens of murals he has painted across South Carolina. Ferg's goal is to get his artwork into the mainstream and make enough money to get a studio.

But "I'm always going to be known as the grits artist," Ferg said. "It's a novelty, I know that."

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IN THE WORLD

Barroso: EU, U.S. must act together

President insists countries can only resolve global crisis by uniting

BY CONSTANT BRAND
The Associated Press

BRUSSELS, Belgium — European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said Thursday that Europe and the United States can only expect to resolve global crises if they act closely together. "The challenges are so huge that we cannot solve them alone," Barroso said in an interview with The Associated Press.

He called for a "political commitment" to work together on issues such as ensuring Iran does not develop nuclear weapons, mediating between Israel and the Palestinians and curbing global

warning.

"What we want to see clarified is, are we — yes or no — interested in some kind of global partnership between the Europeans and the United States?" Barroso said.



Barroso

the interest of the Europeans, not only because it's in the interest of

the United States — but the international community," Barroso said.

Barroso and Bush will hold talks on Tuesday during the U.S. president's trip to Europe. They will discuss issues ranging from trade, Iran and Iraq to the U.S. contentious plans to drop its 15-year old arms embargo against China — which is strongly opposed by Washington.

Barroso acknowledged that the European Union and Washington at times took "different approaches" including on how to deal with Beijing.

He assured Washington that lifting the embargo could be done

"through a code of conduct that is precise, binding and serious."

"Of course the interest of the European Union and the United States is not arms proliferation in that part of the world," said Barroso. "Even if we do not agree, we should not let one issue contaminate all the other issues where we do have an agreement."

Barroso said he saw a "will to put behind us some differences" such as France and Germany's staunch opposition to the U.S.-led war in Iraq, and also the recent agreement by both sides to resolve the fight over subsidies to U.S. and EU airline makers Boeing and Airbus through negotiations and not through a trade war.

Britain food scare

LONDON — Britain's Food Standards Agency triggered an international food safety alert Friday on a batch of sausage that was contaminated with a dye linked to cancer.

The sauce containing the dye Sudan 1 was used in hundreds of British foods and exported to several European and Caribbean countries and to North America.

The agency used the rapid alert system for food and feed, or RASFF, to send out an alert across Europe, and then to the United States and other countries.

Orthodox sex scandals

ATHENS, Greece — Greece's powerful Orthodox Church, rocked by sex and corruption scandals, held an emergency synod Friday aimed at making wide ranging reforms.

The 102-member Holy Synod is holding two days of meetings that will look at introducing stronger controls over church finances — a rare move by church leader Archbishop Christodoulos.

The full Synod normally meets every October.

Democracy riots

KATMANDU, Nepal — Police arrested 57 opposition protesters Friday, while the royal government plunged Nepal into a communications blackout, cutting phone service to thwart efforts to organize nationwide rallies against the king's seizure of power.

In the capital, Katmandu, the call for demonstrations to recognize Democracy Day went largely unheeded. Opponents had called the rally as a first show of defiance since King Gyanendra seized power on Feb. 1.

Eight people were arrested in Katmandu, at least 36 in Jankapur town and 13 in the Himalayan resort town of Pokhara, police said.

Putin backs Iran

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin said Friday that he is convinced Iran is not seeking to develop nuclear weapons and announced plans to visit the country, showing strong support for Tehran a week before a summit with President Bush.

"The latest steps from Iran confirm that Iran does not intend to produce nuclear weapons," Putin said at a meeting with Iranian National Security Council chief Ehsan Rohani.

Putin's bold expression of faith in Iran's insistence that it does not want nuclear weapons starkly contradicts U.S. suspicions about the intentions of Tehran, which Bush has labeled part of an "axis of evil" seeking weapons of mass destruction and supporting terrorists.

From The Associated Press

Lebanese president vows to get Hariri's killers

BY PAUL GARWOOD
The Associated Press

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Lebanon's pro-Syrian president vowed Friday to hunt down the killers of former premier Rafik Hariri amid wide speculation over the involvement of this country's Damascus-backed government in the assassination.

President Emile Lahoud's commitment came during a condolence visit to his slain rival's home and amid Lebanese government efforts to keep control of the murder investigation, despite calls by Hariri's family and the United States and France for a foreign-led inquiry.

No credible claims of responsibility have emerged since Monday's bombing, which killed Hariri and 16 others. Lebanese have little confidence in an investigation led by their own government in light of its history of being unable to track down those responsible for past political assassinations.

Thousands of Lebanese have signed a 30-year-old banner with the word "Resign" written in French and Arabic, which has been unfurled at Hariri's grave



Lebanese girls light candles Friday at the grave of Lebanon's slain former prime minister, Rafik Hariri, in Beirut, Lebanon.

outside the towering downtown Beirut mosque he built. The popular calls for Prime Minister Omar Karami's government to resign are the first since 1992, when riots forced Karami, who led the government then, to step down.

They also increase pressure on the government, which many ac-

cused have denied involvement and have instead condemned the killing of Hariri, a popular, self-made billionaire who many here credit with rebuilding the country following the devastating 1975-90 civil war.

"The president of the republic stressed to the family of the martyr [Hariri] that the investigation is ongoing to uncover the circumstances of the ugly crime," according to a statement released by Lahoud's office following the meeting with Hariri's two eldest sons, Bahaa and Sadeedine.

The statement added that all clues are being followed that "might lead to identifying those quarters that planned and executed the crime against the martyr of Lebanon and his companions."

Thousands of mourners, including those from Lebanon's Christian Armenian community, prayed at Hariri's grave Friday as Muslims gathered across Beirut for the main mosque prayer service of the week.

Lebanon reopened for business following three days of national mourning, with shops and cafes doing a brisk trade and bustling traffic returning to the streets.

Associated Press correspondent Sam Mruce contributed to this report in Beirut.

U.S. research ship runs aground on coral reef in Mexico

BY MARK STEVENSON
The Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — In a significant embarrassment for American scientists, a U.S. research vessel conducting controversial sound-wave research off Mexico's Gulf coast faces heavy fines for running aground on a coral reef.

American authorities announced on Thursday that the U.S. National Science Foundation ship Maurice Ewing hit a reef about 30 miles off the Yucatan peninsula on Monday, even though the reef was clearly marked on maps.

Mexican Attorney General for Environmental Protection Jose Luis Luege said the ship could be seized temporarily to ensure the fine is paid.

The ship is using sound waves to search for traces of an asteroid that may have wiped out the dinosaurs 65 million years ago.

"The fines will be based on the amount of damage done," said Mexico's Attorney General for Environmental Protection, Jose Luis Luege. "I can't say offhand what the fine will be, but it will be sizable."

The research project had already raised the hackles of environmental activists, who say the technology could harm sea life, including whales, which use sound waves to communicate.

The Monday accident, which authorities did not confirm until Thursday, fueled activists' opposition to the Maurice Ewing.

"They said they had state-of-the-art technology and highly trained personnel, but they

couldn't even detect a sand bank or a coral reef," said Rosario Sosa, president of the Yucatan-based civilian Association for the Rights of Animals and their Habitat.

The environmental protection agency called the accident "inexplicable," noting the reef was clearly marked on navigational charts for the area.

Officials with Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, which operated the Maurice Ewing, had no immediate comment on the accident.

The Mexican government said the accident affected about 20 square yards of underwater rock formations and about 10 square yards of coral.

"It takes coral a hundred years to grow one meter, so ten meters, that's like a thousand years lost," Sosa said.

Tsunami reveals underwater temple, city

Find is near Indian beach already famous for shoreline sculptures

The Associated Press

MAHABALIPURAM, India — Archaeologists have begun underwater excavations of what is believed to be an ancient city and parts of a temple uncovered by the tsunami off the coast of a centuries-old pilgrimage town.

Three rocky structures with elaborate carvings of animals have emerged near the coastal town of Mahabalipuram, which was battered by the Dec. 26 tsunami.

As the waves receded, the force of the water removed sand deposits that had covered the structures, which appear to belong to a port city built in the seventh century, said T. Satyamurthy, a senior archaeologist with the Archaeological Survey of India.

Mahabalipuram is already well known for its ancient, intricately carved shore temples that have been declared a World Heritage site and are visited each year by thousands of Hindu pilgrims and tourists. According to descriptions by early British travel writers, the area was also home to several pagodas, some of which were submerged by the sea.

The government-run archaeo-

logical society and navy divers began underwater excavations of the area on Thursday.

"The tsunami has exposed a bas relief which appears to be part of a temple wall or a portion of the ancient port city. Our excavations will throw more light on these," Satyamurthy told The Associated Press by telephone from Madras, the capital of Tamil Nadu state.

The six-foot rocky structures that have emerged in Mahabalipuram, 30 miles south of Madras, include an elaborately carved head of an elephant and a horse in flight. Above the elephant's head is a small square-shaped niche with a carved statue of a deity. Another structure uncovered by the tsunami has a reclining lion sculpted on it.

According to archaeologists, lions, elephants and peacocks were commonly used to decorate walls and temples during the Pallava period in the seventh and eighth centuries.

"These structures could be part of the legendary seven pagodas.

With the waters receding and the coastline changing, we expect some more edifices to be exposed," Satyamurthy said.



Local visitors look at a lion head monument near the Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram, India on Thursday. Archaeologists began shoreline and underwater excavations of an ancient port city and parts of a temple which were uncovered by the receding waters of the Dec. 26 tsunami.

Pope's book reflects on shooting

The Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Pope John II for the first time publicly described the moments after he was gravely wounded in 1981, saying in his new book that he was fearful and in pain but had "a strange feeling of confidence" he would live.

In the book, a copy of which was obtained Thursday by The Associated Press, the Polish pontiff also said his would-be assassin, Mehmet Ali Agca, "understood that about his power — the power of shooting and killing — there is a greater power."

In "Memory and Identity: Conversations Between Millenniums," the pope said he remembered being rushed to the hospital but didn't recall much of what happened after he arrived because "I was almost on the other side."

"Oh, my Lord! This was a difficult experience. I woke up the next day, around noon," John Paul wrote.

The book, his fifth, is essentially a transcript of

conversations he had in Polish with his close friends political philosopher Krzysztof Michalski and the late Rev. Jozef Tischner in 1993 at his summer residence near Rome. It will be published Wednesday in Italy by Rizzoli, which also plans an English version soon.

In it, the pope reflected on a range of topics and broadly compared abortion to the Holocaust, saying both derived from governments in conflict with God's laws.

The most personal section of the book contains John Paul's recollections of how his faith sustained him after being shot in the abdomen by the Turkish gunman on May 13, 1981, while riding in an open car in St. Peter's Square.

"Yes, I remember that journey to the hospital," he wrote.

"I remained conscious for some time after. I had a feeling that I would survive. I was in pain, I had reason to be afraid, but I had this strange feeling of confidence."

Police question 7 about IRA financing

The Associated Press

DUBLIN, Ireland — Detectives interrogated seven people Friday — including a Sinn Fein activist and a private banker linked to one of Ireland's most prominent dealmakers — on suspicion of running a major IRA money-laundering operation.

In Dublin, senior police officers and forensic specialists from both parts of Ireland assessed whether any of the more than \$4.75 million seized in police raids nationwide Wednesday night and Thursday had been stolen from the Northern Bank in Belfast.

That mammoth Dec. 20 heist of a world-record \$50 million, allegedly orchestrated by the Irish Republican Army, has sent shock waves through Northern Ireland's decade-old peace process.

Among those in custody were Tom Hanlon, 38, an organizer for the IRA-linked Sinn Fein party, who was arrested at his home in Passage West, County Cork; and Ted Cunningham and Irene Jennings, a Cork couple in their mid-50s who are co-directors of two small financial companies.

Police identified the other four men — one arrested Thursday in

Cork and three others Wednesday night near a Dublin station in alleged possession of suspected members or money-launderers of the Provisional IRA, the outlawed group's full name.

Police said they found no illicit money at the home of Hanlon, a house painter who in 2002 unsuccessfully ran for a seat in Irish parliament on the Sinn Fein ticket.

But they carried to police headquarters in Dublin more than \$4.4 million allegedly found hidden in the Farran, County Cork, home of Cunningham and Johnstone.

Man brings live artillery shell to British Police

DURHAM, England — A souvenir of World War II scared the daylight out of police when the owner strolled into a station with the live artillery shell in a supermarket bag.

Police immediately evacuated the station on Wednesday and called in a military bomb squad, which safely detonated the shell outside of town.

The man, who was not publicly identified, decided to hand over the shell after watching a TV program about World War II.

New Zealander faces exposure charges nude

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — An environmental protester facing indecent exposure charges arrived at Auckland's District Court naked — but dressed before he entered the courtroom Thursday.

Computer technician Simon Oosterman, 24, was charged during the Auckland Naked Bike Ride last Sunday, an event he organized to protest society's dependence on the car.

Oosterman and three supporters — two men and a woman — stood outside the courthouse naked on Thursday holding a banner reading: "Stop indecent exposure to vehicle emissions."

But he donned his clothes before entering court, where he pleaded not guilty and was released to reappear on March 21.

Zimbabwe farmer killed by anti-elephant mines

HARARE, Zimbabwe — A villager in northeastern Zimbabwe was killed when five land mines he dug up to use against marauding elephants exploded in his arms, news reports said Wednesday.

Christian Munetsi had planned to use the mines to protect his corn field from elephants that roam the remote Rushinga district, local police official Michael Munyikwa told state-run media.

Swedish artist hopes to create biggest painting

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — A Swedish artist is hard at work, painting what he hopes will be recognized as the world's largest painting done by a lone artist.

David Asberg has been laboring inside a former aviation hangar since May, painting his 43,056-square-foot "Happy People" portrait of thousands of faces from around the world.

"If this goes according to plan, the painting will be unveiled on my 30th birthday, June 11," he said.

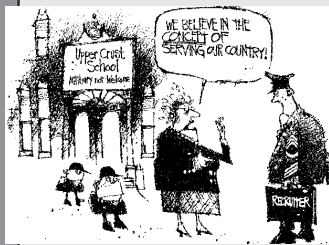
When it's completed, it'll be put on display at the Olympia Stadium in the port city of Helsingborg.

He's also expecting a visit by a representative from Guinness World Records to verify his claim of it being the world's largest painting, he said.

From The Associated Press

Looking at the news

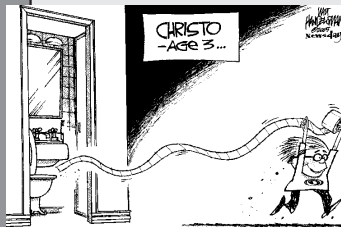
A weekly sampling of U.S. editorial cartoons



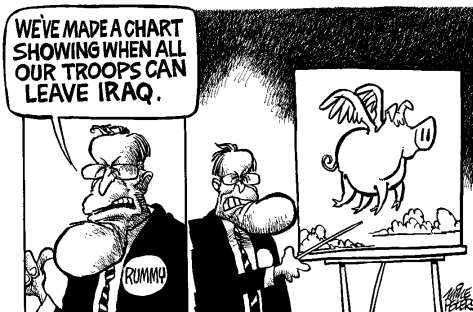
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YOUR MONEY

Get to know your credit score before tying the knot

BY EILEEN AMBROSE

The Baltimore Sun

If personal ads were pragmatic, you might see a pitch like this: Single female with \$20 credit score seeks single male with 800-plus score who enjoys moonlit walks on the beach.

But in matters of the heart, people are rarely pragmatic. It's not unusual for financial opposites to attract, where someone with a good credit history marries a bad credit risk. Often these differences go undiscovered until the two try to buy a house and are denied a loan—or at least one with favorable terms—because of a partner's poor money management.

"Unfortunately, we don't always talk about financial issues. It's so unromantic," said Sheryl Garrett, a Kansas financial planner and author of "Just Give Me The Answers."

But romance can be quickly extinguished, too, if one partner's financial troubles spill over onto the other. David Diggs, a family lawyer in Baltimore, said money is the root of 90 percent of the divorces he handles.

The key to preventing money troubles from damaging a marriage is to talk about finances before walking down the aisle. Only after finding out that credit histories are incompatible can couples begin to take the necessary steps to improve one partner's weak record while preserving the other's good credit.

Broadening the topic of finances isn't always easy.

Some financial planners and divorce lawyers recommend that couples exchange credit reports and credit scores before marriage. A score is typically a three-digit number used to predict the likelihood that a consumer will default on bills. It affects whether or not credit is extended to a consumer and under what terms. Top scores are usually in the 800s.

Looking at credit reports annually is a good idea, anyway, to discover any inaccuracies that could negatively affect how creditors look at you, said Holly Hunter, a financial planner in Portsmouth, N.H.

The big three credit bureaus—Experian, (800) 387-3742; Equifax, (800) 685-1111; and TransUnion, (800) 888-4213—sell credit reports.

A new federal law will entitle consumers to one free credit report a year.

Granted, it's not romantic to study your significant other's credit history. "It's much more romantic than having a divorce a year later," said Ryan Sjoblad, a spokesman for myFICO.com, which sells the widely used FICO credit score.

"A lot of couples go into marriage having no idea of what baggage the other person is carrying with them," said Sjoblad, who jokes that scores someday might appear in personal ads.

But other financial experts say that requesting a credit report can put a partner on the defensive.



Janice and Richard Aparis of Anaheim, Calif., wave to friends and family after getting married Monday at a Little White Wedding Chapel in Las Vegas. As unromantic as it sounds, financial experts recommend couples review each other's credit reports before saying "I do."

Instead, they recommend couples ease into the topic by discussing goals and how they can financially achieve them. Also, couples can attend financial seminars and classes together, or both can read and discuss the same financial book. Garrett recommends Ruth Hayden's "For Richer, Not Poorer—The Money Book for Couples."

What if one of you has a good financial track record and the other's is wanting? State laws vary on the financial obligations of married partners and on the division of property and debts in divorce. Couples with serious financial

difficulties should seek the help of a professional.

But here are some general guidelines for dealing with mismatched credit histories:

■ **Keeping separate accounts.** At least initially, maintain separate bank and charge accounts, and work on building up the spouse's weak credit record, advised Barry J. Dalekoff, an Annapolis, Md., lawyer and chair of the family law section of the Maryland State Bar Association.

■ **Improving a credit record.** Credit scores often are lowered by late payments, so paying bills on time can do a lot to improve a

score. To get a partner in the habit of meeting bill deadlines, both spouses can set up a time each month where they stay home, order a pizza and sit down to review and pay bills, Hunter suggested.

Couples, too, can open a joint charge account with a low credit limit and pay off balances each month to rebuild the weaker credit record, Dalekoff said.

Within two years, someone could see a noticeable improvement in their credit score, experts said.

■ **Buying a home.** This is when credit problems often come to light. Hunter, a former loan officer at a bank, recalled asking a young couple for a list of their credit cards as she worked with them on a mortgage application. The wife handed a stack of credit cards under the table to Hunter. "She didn't want him to see all the credit cards she had," Hunter said.

When one spouse is not credit-worthy, lenders often will try to see if the spouse with the good credit record can qualify alone for a mortgage. Both names, though, can be put on the title. For psychological reasons, it's often better for spouses to take on a mortgage loan together, even if they have to pay a higher rate because of one partner's weak credit score, Garrett said.

With on-time mortgage payments, the mortgage rate will eventually improve. And when that happens, the couple can refinancing to get better terms, Garrett said.

THURSDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY

INDEXES			
52-wk High	Low	Name	Change
10,839.2	9,706.40	Dow Jones Industrials	+19,542.56
3,823.28	2,743.46	Dow Jones Transportation	+1,079.82
558.86	259.88	Dow Jones Utilities	+290.98
7,319.37	6,211.13	NYSE Composite	+1,108.24
1,585.26	1,158.74	Amex Index	+426.52
1,753.82	1,552.62	Nasdaq Composite	+201.20
1,217.90	1,069.72	S&P 500	+148.18
567.29	548.29	S&P MidCap	+19.00
656.11	515.99	Russell 2000	+140.12
12,308.38	10,268.52	DJ Wilshire 5000	+2,039.86

NYSE			
Most Active (\$1 or more)	Most Active (\$1 or more)	Most Active (\$1 or more)	Most Active (\$1 or more)
Volume	Vol	Change	Vol
Intel	399,766	1.29	+0.05
Alcoa	241,113	25.36	+1.11
Newsprint	228,881	29.86	+1.20
Westport	204,547	24.39	+1.24
ExxonMobil	187,726	59.15	+2.37
General	176,647	11.29	+0.38
Eastman	172,483	15.36	+1.17
Johnson	168,896	14.80	+0.31
SPACOR	166,051	12.29	+0.41

Key Defense Stocks				
Name	DIV Pct	YTD Gain	Chg	52-Week
Alliant Technology	—	17.65	—	+6.4
Boeing	1.00	23.85	—	+10.0
Computer Sciences	—	55.66	—	+3.7
General Dynamics	1.44	105.90	—	+1.2
Harris Corp.	—	41.79	—	+5.5
Lockheed Martin	1.80	21.32	—	+7.1
Northrop	—	38.50	—	+6.8
Raytheon	—	37.50	—	+6.8
Boeing	1.00	23.85	—	+10.0
Computer Sciences	—	55.66	—	+3.7
General Dynamics	1.44	105.90	—	+1.2
Harris Corp.	—	41.79	—	+5.5
Lockheed Martin	1.80	21.32	—	+7.1
Northrop	—	38.50	—	+6.8
Raytheon	—	37.50	—	+6.8

Key Mutual Funds				
Name	NAV	YTD Gain	Chg	52-Week
Fidelity Investor	37.83	—	+8.0	—
Fidelity Growth	42.56	—	+8.0	—
Fidelity Capital	42.56	—	+8.0	—
Fidelity Investor	37.83	—	+8.0	—
Fidelity Growth	42.56	—	+8.0	—
Fidelity Capital	42.56	—	+8.0	—
Fidelity Investor	37.83	—	+8.0	—
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Fidelity Growth	42.56	—	+8.0	—
Fidelity Capital	42.56	—	+8.0	—
Fidelity Investor	37.83	—	+8.0	—
Fidelity Growth	42.56	—	+8.0	—
Fidelity Capital	42.56	—	+8.0	—
Fidelity Investor	37.83	—	+8.0	—
Fidelity Growth	42.56	—	+8.0	—



BMW Military Sales Program

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Military Sales Program
www.bmw.de/militarysales

Disturbing survey

CT KILLINGLY — A survey of teenagers in northeastern Connecticut has found an increasing number use household products to get high. The survey of 1,230 students in the 21-town region found 12 percent of ninth-graders and 15 percent of 10th-graders said they have used, at least once, aerosol sprays or other household products to get high.

Ethanol legislation

MT HELENA — The Senate passed legislation requiring that most gasoline sold in Montana be blended to contain 10 percent ethanol. The law would take effect a year after yet-to-be-built ethanol plants are capable of producing \$5 million gallons of the product, considered enough to meet Montana's yearly demand. The bill now goes to the House.

A faithful risk

OK GROVE — Usually, parishioners offer money to their churches. This time, the church handed out money.

Pastor Steve Dyer of the News-om Church gave \$14,000 to congregation members to invest for seven weeks, after which they are to bring the money and profits back to the church to be used in missionary work.

Dyer said the church isn't keeping track of who has the money.

He only gave one stipulation: It was not to be used to buy lottery tickets or to gamble.

Marijuana lawsuit

CA BERKELEY — Medical marijuana advocates filed a lawsuit Tuesday demanding California Highway Patrol officers stop confiscating pot from authorized users.

The lawsuit is the latest salvo in the long-running debate over medical marijuana in California, approved by voters in 1996, opposed by federal authorities ever since and applied unevenly all over the state.

The lawsuit against the highway patrol — which also names Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Attorney General Bill Lockyer — says CHP's "rigid policy" of seizing medical marijuana "causes law-abiding citizens to suffer pain, humiliation, loss of dignity, extreme anxiety and a fear of the police."

The lawsuit seeks a court order stopping the CHP from seizing marijuana from legitimate patients.

Balloon creates sparks

IN MISHAWAKA — A Valentine's Day gift sure created some sparks here — when it plunged 2,100 homes and businesses into the dark.

The heart-shaped metallic Mylar balloon caused an electrical outage when it drifted into an electrical substation, said Phil Miller, the general manager of Mishawaka Utilities.

"It said 'I Love You' on it," he said. "It looks like someone didn't hold onto their Valentine's gift tightly enough."

The string caused a short circuit in a bank of capacitors, which are components that store electrical

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

charges within the city's power transmission network.

McLost and found

FL ORLANDO — Carol Birmingham almost had a heart attack when she realized her Mac Attack had cost \$8,700.

The 62-year-old British tourist didn't notice until Sunday morning that she had left her cash-stuffed purse on a McDonald's counter when she bought lunch the previous day.

Inside was her down payment for a vacation home.

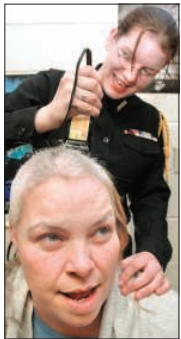
But the panic was short-lived since an assistant manager at the restaurant turned the money over to the Orange County Sheriff's Office for safekeeping.

The Birmingham returned to McDonald's on Monday to give Barattin and fellow manager Aileen Norris an undisclosed reward.

'Squatters law' upheld

HI HONOLULU — A federal judge on Monday rejected a civil rights group's request to block the enforcement of a state law that allows authorities to ban people from public places after one warning.

U.S. District Judge Helen Gillmor scheduled a March 14 hearing to listen to the people allegedly



Close cut

Freeport High School, Ill., ROTC Cadet Beth Peters finishes shaving Drill Team Coach Lorrie Budden's hair cut. Budden fulfilled her promise to have her head shaved if the Freeport team placed in competition.

wronged by the law and establish whether the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii has a case.

Gillmor said she wanted to hear what the "actual impact" of the law has been since it was passed last May.

The law, known as Act 50 or the "squatters law," prohibits a person or group from entering a beach, park or other public place — including libraries or the state Capitol — for up to one year after receiving a warning or request to leave the premises.

Large alumni gift

NY ALFRED — Alfred University received a \$35 million donation from a 1954 graduate, President Charles Edmondson announced Monday.

The gift is the largest in the school's history.

Marlin Miller Jr. and his wife, Regina, gave \$10 million to expand the Miller Performing Arts Center, which opened in 1995.

The remainder of the money will go into the university's endowment to fund faculty positions, scholarships and visual and performing arts programs.

Political puppies

MN ST. PAUL — Attorney General Mike Hatch's office really went to the dogs.

Hatch brought his golden retriever, Bella, and her nine puppies to the office Tuesday at the request of his staff, which wanted to throw a "puppy shower." Laddie, the dogs' father, stayed home.

Leslie Sandberg, a spokeswoman for Hatch, said all the puppies have been purchased or spoken for. But it will be a few weeks before the mouth-old puppies head to their new homes.

Hatch said of the puppies, "They were born Republicans, but then they opened their eyes and now they're Democrats."

Phoenix-area light rail

AZ TEMPE — Nearly five years after Phoenix-area voters approved light rail, construction on the first line of Metro track began Tuesday.

Mayors from the three cities where the initial rail will run — Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa — joined dignitaries and the public for a ceremony to officially mark the start.

Utility work and construction of the train's maintenance and storage facility are under way. Now workers will start laying track for an initial 20-mile line, beginning with a 1-mile segment near the border of Tempe and Phoenix. Electric rail cars will start running on that test track by spring 2006.

The initial line is scheduled to open in December 2008.

Revenue shift blasted

KY FRANKFORT — Democratic senators from coal-producing counties blasted Republican Gov. Ernie Fletcher's budget plans to give the state's general fund some tax money usually marked for their counties. Now all coal mined in Kentucky is subject to a 5 percent tax which is split about evenly between the counties and the state. Fletcher wants Kentucky to get more than \$50 million of the money that the counties now receive.



Learning the tricks

Michael Harvey, 14, right, gives skateboarding lessons to his younger sister Candace, 12, in Farmington, N.M.



Beary nice

Don Lanco uses a chain saw to carve a statue of a bear behind Pollock Street Deli in New Bern, N.C.



Move 'em out

Members of a multigenerational Yampa Valley ranching family, from left, Becky, Perk and Ray Heid, gather horses on the family ranch, north of Steamboat Springs, Colo., after a storm.



Race of the beds Mississippi State University aerospace engineering students, left to right, Will Barksdale of Pascagoula, Vanessa Aubuchon of Ocean Springs, Jennifer Esper of LaPlace, La., and Rod Fleming of Rocky Mount, N.C., won the "Engineering Bedlam" event during National Engineers Week activities on the MSU campus.



Stuck in the office A white-tailed deer struggles to get back out of an office window at G.A. Braun Inc. in Syracuse, N.Y. The deer had crashed through the glass window into the office.



BITTTTTT ... John Licari, Fort Atkinson, Wis., tries to stay warm as he waits in vain for a fish to bite before going in to warm up, while ice fishing at Brittingham Park in Monona Bay, Madison, Wis.



Picture perfect Peg Connery-Boyd paints a street scene using oil paints in Mystic, Conn.

Bugging suspected

RI PROVIDENCE — State police have launched an investigation at the Providence police headquarters after what's been described as a listening device was discovered covertly mounted under an employee's desk.

According to the union, a civilian employee who transcribes handwritten police reports into a computer noticed a tiny canister magnetically mounted beneath her desk. The woman gave it to police Lt. John Kaya, who unscrewed it and discovered a battery, circuits and what appeared to be a microphone. Kaya and two sergeants agreed that it appeared to be a bugging device, according to Sgt. Robert Pannicia, president of the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 3.

Union officials met with Cmdr. Paul Kennedy, and they agreed that the state police investigate. The Providence Journal reported.

Boy dies from gunshot

GA FOREST PARK — A 2-year-old boy was removed from life support Saturday, after being shot during a confrontation between his family and an intruder demanding money, authorities said.

It was not clear who fired the shot that struck Xavier Miranda. The boy had been declared brain dead, a hospital spokesman said.

Police said an intruder entered the family's apartment Thursday and grabbed Xavier while demanding \$1,000 in tax return money from the child's father.

The assailant started counting down while holding a gun pointed at the child's head. Before he could finish the countdown, the boy's aunt walked into the room.

Shots then were fired by both the suspect and the father, according to police.

Tax to pinch dairy farms

ME KNOX — After a couple of years of relatively stable prices, dairy farmers are facing their latest challenge: a tax on livestock semen, a product that is nothing less than critical to dairy operation.

Bull semen is as basic as feed to dairy operations, which breed cows about once every 14 months to keep them producing milk. Bulls aren't used much because they are hard to manage.

Farmers long avoided a tax many didn't even know existed as Genex Cooperative Inc., the largest livestock semen distributor in Maine, simply paid the 5 percent levy without passing it through to farmers, according to state Rep. John Nutting, D-Leeds. Then the company decided it would stop paying the tax and it started showing up on farmers' bills.

"That's why the issue has just hit the fan," said Nutting.

Pet lab turns into rat

TX GRAPEVINE — The owner of J.D. the Labrador may be wishing his dog weren't such a good retriever.

Matthew Porter of Richland Hills and two friends were playing Frisbee golf in a park when a police officer who thought he smelled burning marijuana began questioning them.

As the officer was checking for outstanding warrants, J.D. waded into a nearby creek and emerged

with a bag containing the drug. Porter, 25, was charged with possessing drug paraphernalia. Micah Hays, 24, was charged with marijuana possession. J.D. was turned over to the third person at the park, who faces no charges.

Prairie dogs blamed

MT INTERIOR — Jerry Heinrichs says that because of the long-running drought across the West, his cattle had to compete with prairie dogs for the grass. And the prairie dogs won.

Across his ranch and other swaths of both private and government-owned grassland in southwestern South Dakota, little remains but bare dirt, stones, prairie dog mounds and the burrowing rodents that live under them.

Heinrichs mostly blames the federal government, which for more than four years stopped poisoning prairie dogs while it decided whether they critters deserved to be protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Ranchers say that the pests soon invaded their ranches and ate all the grass, devoured prickly pear cactus and dug down to get plant roots. Jonathan Proctor, a spokesman for the Predator Conservation Alliance, disputed the ranchers' account, saying the bare land was caused not by prairie dogs but by overgrazing during the drought.

Truck owner fined

VT BENNINGTON — Poorly maintained brakes, worn tires and speed may have contributed to a truck's collision with a school bus that sent six students to the hospital.

The state has fined the owner of the truck, Dallas & Mavis Specialized Carrier Co., of Wisconsin, \$500 for an inoperative brake, a brake component violation and poor tire depth, according to a state motor vehicles official.

The tires "were basically bald and some ... actually had wires exposed," said Lt. Del Doucette of the Bennington Police.

An alarming ovation

VA RICHMOND — The Senate half an hour has been in session about half an hour and had Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer and several of his football players a rousing ovation when fire sirens sounded.

Senators, delegates, staff and about 100 Capitol visitors filed out and waited while the building was cleared.

"In the last 44 years, I don't recall coming out of a House session for a fire alarm or for any other reason," said Del. Lacey Putney.

No fire was found in the building.

Teen shot to death

NY NEW YORK — A 16-year-old Bronx boy is dead and another is under arrest for shooting him five times, killing him, police said.

Fernando Corea, a football team captain at Alfred E. Smith High School, was shot near his home, just days before his 17th birthday.

Police later arrested Quindel Francis, who lives in the nearby, and charged him with Corea's murder and criminal weapons possession. The shooting was said to be over a long-term feud between Corea's refusal to join the Bloods gang.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

Alanis' dual citizenship

Canadian Alanis Morissette is now an American citizen. The 30-year-old singer was among some 4,500 people who took the citizenship oath during a ceremony last week at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

Morissette isn't turning her back on Canada—she's maintaining dual citizenship.

"I will never renounce my Canadian citizenship," Morissette said in a statement Wednesday.

"I consider myself a Canadian-American."

Morissette's songs include "Ironic" and "You Oughta Know."

Ashley fights back

Ashley Olsen is suing The National Enquirer for \$40 million in damages over a story alleging that she was involved in a drug scandal, reports The Associated Press.

The lawsuit filed in Los Angeles Superior Court on Monday alleges libel and false light invasion of privacy by the tabloid.

The lawsuit said that while a story in The Enquirer's Feb. 21 issue doesn't refer to her using or selling drugs, it implied that Olsen, 18, was doing so with a misleading headline and cover picture depicting the actress with her eyes half-shut.

"Freedom of the press is a valuable right, but it is not a license for gossip tabloids to tar and feather innocent celebrities and destroy their reputations and businesses for the rags' profits," the lawsuit said.

No Europe tour for J.Lo

Days after performing a duet with husband Marc Anthony at the Grammy Awards show, Jennifer Lopez has canceled a European tour because of illness.

Lopez had been scheduled to attend the British charity premiere of her movie "Shall We Dance?" with costar Richard Gere on Wednesday. She called off the trip at the last minute, saying she was too ill to travel.

"I very much wanted to be in London today but unfortunately I'm not well," she said in a statement.

"At the advice of my doctors, I'm unable to travel... Please accept my sincerest apologies as I have to remain in Los Angeles."

The statement, which said the illness had caused Lopez "to cancel my European album tour," didn't specify what was wrong. J.Lo's new album, "Rebirth," is scheduled for release March 1.

Photos and stories from wire services



"Tonight Show" host Jay Leno talks with actress Annette Bening earlier this month. Bening has been nominated for an Oscar for "Being Julia."

Is the third time the charm for Annette Bening?

Nominee says these Oscars will be easy no matter what — she's not pregnant

BY BARRY KOLTNOV

The Orange County Register

HIDDEN in the winding canyon roads high above Los Angeles is a nondescript shopping center where the rich and famous shop for groceries, pick up Starbucks coffee and schmooze over bagels in a popular deli.

Although the area is a rural setting, the cars in the parking lot represent the spectrum of sophisticated luxury automobiles from Europe. Everybody is somebody in this neighborhood, and nobody is more somebody than Annette Bening.

All heads turn in her direction as the Oscar-nominated actress makes her way to a rear booth in a favorite breakfast spot. In less than a minute, an older couple who claim to be friends of Bening's husband, Warren Beatty, approach the booth and introduce themselves. A few minutes later, a fawning but opportunistic young woman pitches the actress on a book she wants to write about women who are "centered."

Ever polite, Bening accepts the woman's phone number, scrawled on a napkin, and promises to consider the proposal.

These are busy times for the 46-year-old actress, who has been nominated in the Best Actress category for her portrayal of a flamboyant British actress facing mid-life in the 1930s drama "Being Julia." It is her third Oscar nomination, the other two coming by way of "The Grifters" and "American Beauty."

Over a breakfast of scrambled egg whites, the tall, impossibly trim mother of four, dressed in a fashionable black pants suit, describes a typical day in this pre-Oscar period, the secret pact she once made with her fellow nominees and why she had to run out of the

Governor's Ball on one of the biggest nights of her husband's career.

Q: Please describe the morning of a glamorous Oscar-nominated movie star.

A: It started today at about 5:30 a.m. when my youngest daughter crawled into bed. That was sort of a wake-up call because I couldn't fall back asleep. So I fed the dog. Then I fed the kids, got them dressed and drove them to school.

Q: How glamorous. Didn't you do anything remotely related to movie stardom this morning?

A: I talked with some people about the dress.

Q: OK, now we're talking. What about the dress?

A: The dress is paramount in my life right now. All my girlfriends are voting on which dress I should wear to the Oscars. My husband has a vote. My kids have a vote. Is that the kind of glamour stuff you were looking for?

Q: Absolutely. I'm glad you're doing something frivolous along with raising a family and trying to have a life.

A: I really am trying to have a life.

Q: I know you are. With that in mind, how much time do you have to devote to things like the Oscars?

A: That's a good question. The whole awards stuff is fun, and it's wonderful to be recognized. It's very gratifying. But it's also very intangible. It always comes back to the work. I'm starting a new movie in March ("Running With Scissors") so that helps to keep me grounded. And, of course, the kids do that every day. Their needs are constant, and I'm grateful for that.

Q: This is your third nomination. How were your experiences at the Oscars ceremony the first two times?

A: The first time I had only done a couple of movies so it never occurred to me that I'd win. So I sat back and had a lot of fun.

But that experience was made even better when the five nominees in my category got together minutes before the show started and agreed that we'd meet for dinner the next week and whoever won would pay. Whoopi Goldberg won ("Ghost"). A few days later, I got a bouquet of flowers from Whoopi with a card that said to meet at a certain restaurant at a certain time. Everybody made it except Lorraine Bracco because she was working.

Q: So you really didn't think you would win?

A: There was no hype about me so I didn't think about it. That is, until the very last second when they called my name as one of the nominees, and I thought: "They could actually call my name."

Q: The second Oscar night was the famous pregnancy scare, wasn't it?

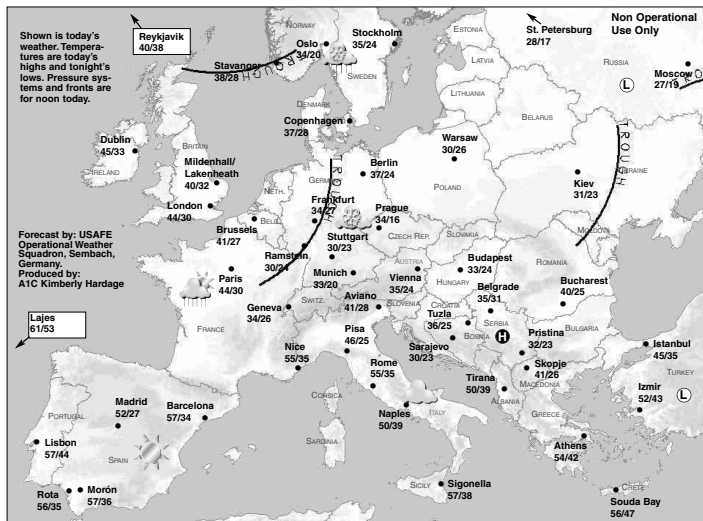
A: There was never any real danger of me delivering that night. I was still a couple of weeks away from my due date. But the experience of being pregnant is so all-consuming that no matter what's going on, that's all you can think about. But "American Beauty" was getting a lot of awards, my husband got a very prestigious award that night and it was starting to get a bit overwhelming. Finally, at the Governor's Ball, with 36 cameras in my face and the baby moving around constantly from the adrenaline flowing in my system, I couldn't take it anymore. I didn't feel well, so as discreetly as I could, I walked out. Warren ran after me and we went home, where I could just be a pregnant lady and not a movie star.

A: Will you enjoy it more this time?

Q: I think it will be a lot easier not being pregnant.

Q: Do you think you might win?

A: I just don't know.



EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Cloudy with isolated rain and thunderstorms. Highs in the lower 40s. Sunday lows in the upper 20s.

Britain, Ireland: Partly to mostly cloudy with isolated rain showers. Highs in the lower to mid 50s with Sunday lows in the lower 30s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Partly cloudy. Highs in the low to mid 50s. Sunday lows in the low to mid 20s.

France: Partly to mostly cloudy with isolated rain showers. Highs in the mid to mid 30s. Sunday lows in the mid to upper 20s.

Northern Germany: Cloudy with snow showers. Highs in the low to mid 30s. Sunday lows in the mid to upper 20s.

Southern Germany: Cloudy with snow showers. Highs in the lower 30s. Sunday lows in the low to mid 20s.

Hungary: Cloudy with snow showers. Highs in the lower 30s. Sunday lows in the mid to upper 20s.

Northern Italy: Partly to mostly cloudy. Highs in the low 40s. Sunday lows in the mid to upper 20s.

Southern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the 50s. Sunday lows in the mid to upper 30s.

Kosovo: Partly to mostly cloudy. Highs in the lower 30s. Sunday lows in the lower 20s.

Norway: Cloudy with rain and snow showers. Highs in the 30s. Sunday lows in the 20s.

Portugal, Spain: Sunny. In the north, highs in the 50s with Sunday lows in the lower 30s. In the south, highs in the upper 50s with Sunday lows in the mid 30s to mid 40s. Inland, highs in the lower 50s with Sunday lows in the upper 20s.

Turkey: Partly to mostly cloudy with isolated rain showers. In the west and north, highs in the mid 40s to lower 50s with Sunday lows in the mid 20s to lower 40s. In the south, highs in the mid 60s with Sunday lows in the lower 50s. Inland, highs in the upper 30s with Sunday lows in the upper 20s.

Sunrise forecast for 19 February 2005



AFRICA

Cape Town	71	62	Mogadishu	89	70
Dakar	71	62	Nairobi	82	57
Freeport	88	75	Rabat	62	41
Khartoum	88	75	Tripoli	60	42

THE WORLD

Amsterdam	HI	LO	Manila	HI	LO
Antwerp	41	30	Mexico City	88	72
Beijing	71	56	Montreal	15	47
Bombay	70	54	Nairobi	82	57
Buenos Aires	64	53	Rio de Jan.	84	68
Calcutta	84	69	Sao Paulo	84	68
Chennai	84	69	Sofia	37	22
Hong Kong	56	46	Sydney	64	49
London	57	44	Tokyo	49	37

MIDEAST



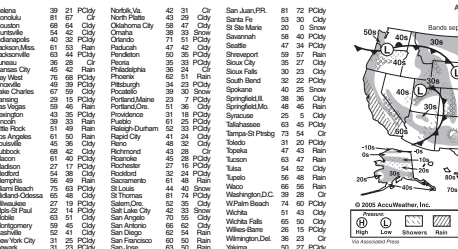
SUN & MOON

Sunrise (Baghdad)	Today 5:52AM	Tomorrow 6:52AM
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	7:29AM	7:27AM
Sunset (Baghdad)	5:52PM	5:52PM
Sunset (Frankfurt)	5:51PM	5:53PM

TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

Alaska	HI	LO	Ont.	HI	LO
Alaska	66	55	Calif.	66	55
Alaska	66	55	Calif.	66	55
Alaska	66	55	Calif.	66	55
Alaska	66	55	Calif.	66	55
Alaska	66	55	Calif.	66	55
Alaska	66	55	Calif.	66	55
Alaska	66	55	Calif.	66	55
Alaska	66	55	Calif.	66	55
Alaska	66	55	Calif.	66	55

THE UNITED STATES



Scheduled for **ETS** or **PCS**?

Check our Relocation Guide every Saturday to find Realtors at your station.

STARS & STRIPES
Your Hometown Newspaper

Horoscope

Your role in the world influences what you see in the mirror and vice versa. Though the Cancer moon brings awareness to the small solar system of our lives — the home environment and five most important loved ones who orbit our hearts — Mercury and Uranus agree to bring a glimpse of what we might do to enlarge our sphere of power.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(February 19). You're an inspiration to others this year. You come through for someone big time next month, and as a result, that person holds you in high esteem and shares his or her best with you. A graduation of some kind is featured in May, and you're on your way. Financial spikes come in April and August.

September brings the exotic to your door. Your lucky numbers are: 10, 5, 22, 40 and 2.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). A minor interference could hang you up big time if not dealt with squarely. So think ahead, and act quickly to clear problems while they are small. Let friends know how you'd like to be treated.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Stick with that decision you made long ago because it's noble to do so. Take a deep breath, and try to consider everyone's feelings. Spots are a lucky outlet bringing up your endorphin level and popularity level, too.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Your life mission steers you through important choices. If you don't have a mission statement, make one up. Someone asks for a loan, but what this person really needs is emotional support.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Change is healthy, but you'd never know it the way you're fighting tooth and nail to keep things as they are! Let go. You're safe now — you really are! A new environment offers artistic inspiration.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Clarify goals before friends and authority

figures set you off on a tangent. Plan a trip without worrying about how you will fund it. Once your plan is in place, you attract the required funds.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Your charisma reaches far and wide.

You'll be surprised at who responds to your charm now. Distant family matters may require attention. Singles could find themselves attracted to an older romantic prospect.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). If you're using your creativity, your achievements will be satisfying on many levels. Expect romance to be an ebb and flow. Do something that will meet both physical and spiritual needs — like yoga or Tai Chi.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Remember that you're not the only sensitive one. Eggshell walking has its time and place — this is it.

When you are tired of battling the difficult moments of the daily grind, a kindly air sign helps out.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). People from the past will cross your mind, for no apparent reason. It's lucky to get in touch with one of these folks, especially if things ended badly. Focus on positive memories, and hope for the happiness of others.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Adventure awaits. Maybe you will find it just around the corner at your local mini-mart, or maybe it will take the form of an unexpected trip. You can go kicking and screaming or just go — the choice is always yours!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Worries are blown out of proportion if you allow it. But if you concentrate on what is working well, you'll be able to re-create success again and again. The timing is perfect tonight for a romantic gesture.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Your healing gift is emphasized. You can bring comfort to anyone who needs it by just being there. Reading keeps you in touch with the world at large. Someone younger has new words for you; listen up.

Creators Syndicate

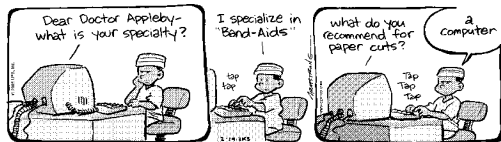
Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



Zits



Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



Red Rover



Better or Worse



Peanuts



Potential wife seeking a free ride

Dear Abby: I'm going with a girl from Denver who tells me that when a couple travels together on trips, cruises, etc., they share the expenses. But when they get engaged, the fellow should pay all expenses on all trips, etc. Is this what they do in Denver, or will I be taken advantage of?

— Needs To Know in California

Dear Needs To Know: The attitude you describe is not specific to one geographical area. You are being put on notice that the moment you put a ring on this young woman's finger, you will be expected to support her financially. If that's your definition of being taken advantage of, find a girl from a lower altitude with less lofty expectations.

Dear Abby: I hope you'll print this. Many women will face what happened to me. They

Dear Abby



should be prepared. After 36 years of marriage, I finally confronted my husband about his cheating. I had remained silent for decades, hoping he'd change as he grew older. His response? He left me and filed for divorce. He said I had been a good wife, but he wanted to start a new life.

Thank the Lord that before I confronted him, I had begun to get my affairs in order. I had been saving from my household allowance (I was a stay-at-home mother of four), knowing I'd need money to defend myself should he ever leave me. I gathered all the information I could about our finances and photographed all of our possessions. Had I acted differently, I would have lost my share of our assets, as he tried to hide them.

I also got my GED certificate, took nurse's training and began looking for a job. I had already established credit in my own

name, using my husband's salary because I had none. I did not confront my husband until I was prepared to take care of myself. Aware that my children still loved their father, even if they no longer respected him, I didn't try to destroy him. I remained a lady through it all, so that if he came to his senses and realized our marriage was worth saving, I'd have no regrets about my actions.

While I wouldn't wish what I went through on my worst enemy, I'm glad I handled it the way I did. It took more than five years for me to recover. My life will never be the same. I lost my husband, my church, my last child left home, and I went through menopause — all in one year. But if I can survive, anyone can.

— Standing Tall in Texas

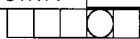
Dear Standing Tall: I wish you success and happiness in your new life.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69404, Los Angeles, CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at <http://www.uxpress.com/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate

JUMBLE

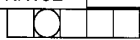
Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter at each square, to form four ordinary words.

STRYT

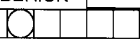


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KRYJE

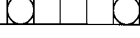


BERICK



www.jumble.com

VAUDLE



Print answer here: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Yesterday's Jumbles: MUSTY SNOWY ABACUS BEAUTY
Answer: He destroyed the piece of sculpture because the — BUST WAS A BUST

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers Monday)

Teacher's pet now in the doghouse

Dear Annie: People often say that one should never get involved in an office romance, but it's too late for me. I am a 23-year-old woman who got involved with my much-older boss, a professor whom I was assisting while working on my graduate degree.

In an academic setting this is frowned upon, so we kept it secret for over a year.

The problem, however, is that it was incredibly difficult for me when the relationship came to an end. I stopped working for this man, but now find myself adrift both emotionally and professionally in the department. And I never anticipated the professional retribution from him and from my peers.

I have lost more than I can describe. No one ever talks about student-teacher relationships, but they happen all the time. I can handle the heart-

Annie's Mailbox



ache, but how do I handle the professional fallout?

— Former Teacher's Pet
Dear Former Pet: While we cannot condone your behavior, the truth is, your professor is the one at fault. He abused his authority by taking advantage of his position over you, and he should have known better than to get involved with a student.

Inform this professor that he will immediately stop penalizing you for the affair or you will report him to the head of the department or the dean of the school. You made a mistake, and now you must deal with the consequences. So, stabilize.

Dear Annie: I'd like to reply to "Hopeless Epileptic," who had a seizure while on a date. I have a suggestion.

In addition to seeing-eye dogs and hearing-ear dogs, these

days we have specially trained dogs to alert epileptics before a seizure so that they can get to safety before the onset. The advantage of having such a dog is twofold. First, he has a companion to help him. Second, a dog is a great conversation starter and a good way to meet people.

I live north of Purdy, Wash., where the Purdy Women's Prison is located. These women began training seeing-eye dogs, and the project grew. The inmates now train dogs for other special needs as well. They have an excellent reputation. This idea might be worth looking into for that gentleman.

— Port Orchard, Wash.

Dear Port Orchard: Thank you for your wonderful suggestion.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Creators Syndicate

Family Circus



2-19

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www.familycircus.com

"Daddy said we'll have some good old-fashioned music in our church if they can find an organ donor."

GRAFFITI



Dennis the Menace



"MR. WILSON SAYS HE RUNS ON COFFEE, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE HE GETS VERY GOOD MILEAGE."

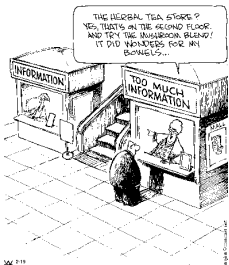
© Gary Larson

The Far Side



The third most common cause of forest fires.

Non Sequitur



"THE IDEAL TEA, THERE? YES, TEA IN THE SECOND FLOOR, AND TEA IN THE HALLWAY BLEND! IT DO WONDER FOR MY BENEFITS..."



'Unselfish' T-wolves hand Cavaliers a loss

Szczerbiak leads hosts' 55-6 edge in bench scoring

The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — For someone who wanted nothing to do with the coaching profession, Kevin McHale sure seems to be suited for it.

Wally Szczerbiak came off the bench to score 26 points, and Kevin Garnett added 20 points, 18 rebounds and six assists to lead the Minnesota Timberwolves to a 94-88 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers on Thursday night.

"Kevin's got us playing beautiful basketball, unselfish basketball," Garnett said. "He's like a breath of fresh air."

Since McHale took over for his old college buddy Flip Saunders, the Timberwolves have shown a spark and enthusiasm that had been sorely lacking during their historically disappointing start to the season.

"We have to work out the opponent every game," said McHale, who is 2-1 since taking over for Saunders on Sunday. "That doesn't mean points, that doesn't mean rebounds, that doesn't mean assists. It means digging in and beating somebody to a rebound."

After sleepwalking through the first half of the season, the Timberwolves have embraced McHale's credo.

"We're playing a lot different," Cavaliers guard Jeff McInnis said. "They are taking on McHale's personality and playing a lot harder."

The Cavaliers were looking for their 31st victory before the All-Star break after winning just 35 games last season. Were it not for LeBron James' illness, they just might have pulled it off.

James had 26 points, eight assists and seven rebounds, but was helped to the locker room early in the fourth quarter while battling exhaustion from being ill. After getting fluids in the locker room, James returned to the court with just four minutes left to play and had to turn to his knees in the huddle during a timeout.

James didn't address the media after the game. A team spokesman said that he was being treated for the flu.

Roundup

Zydrunas Ilgauskas added 24 points, nine rebounds and two blocks, but the output from Cleveland's two All-Stars wasn't enough to offset Minnesota's 55-6 advantage in bench scoring.

Szczerbiak led the reserves, with Fred Hoiberg adding 13 points and Eddie Griffin chipping in nine points, 10 rebounds and four blocks.

"Our bench killed them," Szczerbiak said. "We've got the ability to do that. We've got a really potent second unit. We can come in with some players that are really being aggressive and looking to score. That can keep teams on their heels and take the wind out of their sails."

That was certainly the case with Cleveland. When James went to the bench to catch a breather, the Cavs seemed lost, unable to find the scoring punch needed to keep up with the well-balanced Wolves.

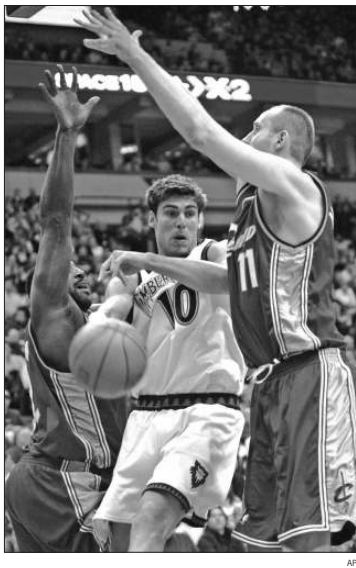
McInnis did his best to fill in, hitting two big jumpers off drives to the basket that gave Cleveland an 81-79 lead with 4:30 to play.

The Timberwolves responded with an 11-2 run. Garnett hit a layup and jumper, Szczerbiak added a jumper to the court, but Griffin sealed the win when he took a no-look pass from Garnett and made a reverse layup with 23 seconds to go.

McInnis had 17 points and seven assists, and Drew Gooden added 12 points and 10 rebounds for Cleveland.

"It was frustrating," Ilgauskas said. "At some point, we have to figure this out. Really good teams that go deep in the playoffs win games like that and we haven't."

Mavericks 119, Suns 113: At Phoenix, Michael Finley matched his season high with 33 points and John Howard had a career-high 30 to help undermanned Dallas erase a 10-point halftime deficit.



Minnesota's Wally Szczerbiak (10) passes between Cleveland defenders Zydrunas Ilgauskas, right, and Robert Taylor, left, during the Timberwolves' 94-88 victory Thursday. Szczerbiak had a team-high 26 points as the Timberwolves improved to 2-1 under coach Kevin McHale.

The loss dropped the Suns to 41-13 and denied them an opportunity to finish with NBA's best record before the All-Star break. That honor goes to the San Antonio Spurs (41-12).

Dallas (35-16) completed a perfect four-game trip, beating Phoenix, Sacramento, Seattle and Golden State.

"We went into four hostile environments and got four big wins," Finley said.

Finley, recently challenged by coach Don Nelson to increase his production, scored 25 points in the second half. In the fourth quarter, he connected on three three-pointers and scored 13 points.

"More than offense, we wanted consistent leadership from him, more rebounding and tougher defense," assistant coach Avery Johnson said of Finley. "Some times you need a heart-to-heart with the coach."

The Suns concentrated on stopping Dirk Nowitzki, the league's third-leading scorer with a 27.1 average, and held him to 16 points. He also had 16 rebounds.

"They let off Nowitzki all the time and that opened the floor for everyone else," Howard said.

Amare Stoudemire led the Suns with 31 points and 12 rebounds. Quentin Richardson had 22, and Steve Nash added 19 points and 11 assists — the 11th consecutive game he had at least that many assists.

The Mavericks played without three key players — center Erick Dampier (strained tendon in right foot), swingman Jerry Stackhouse (strained right groin) and point guard Marquis Daniels (appendicitis).

"I felt there was more pressure but also more freedom to be myself and play my game," Lewis said. "At the same time, I knew I'd have to produce more and that the team had confidence in me to be one of the main guys."

After star Gary Payton was traded in February 2003, McMillan called more plays down the stretch for Lewis. The youngster's confidence grew, and he formed a comfortable fit with Ray Allen, acquired in the Payton deal.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	19	16	.543	
Philadelphia	26	27	.491	1
New Jersey	21	32	.396	6
New York	21	32	.396	6
Toronto	12	42	.220	19

Central Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	40	24	.625	
Washington	29	22	.567	9
Orlando	28	24	.538	11
Charlotte	19	39	.328	17
Atlanta	10	41	.196	29½

Southwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	32	19	.627	
Cleveland	20	21	.488	7
Chicago	26	23	.531	5
Indiana	25	26	.490	7
Milwaukee	20	30	.400	11½

Western Conference

Northwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	41	12	.774	
Dallas	35	16	.686	5
Houston	32	20	.615	9
Memphis	29	23	.558	12
New Orleans	11	41	.208	30

Southwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	29	19	.604	
Minnesota	27	17	.613	10
Denver	24	24	.500	12½
Portland	21	27	.439	16
Utah	15	37	.287	19

Pacific Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Phoenix	41	13	.759	
Sacramento	39	19	.672	7½
L.A. Lakers	26	24	.520	15
L.A. Clippers	20	29	.408	21½
Golden State	15	38	.283	29½

Midwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Dallas 115, Phoenix 88				

No games scheduled

Saturday's games

No games scheduled

Sunday's games

All-Star Game at Denver

Thursday

T-wolves 94, Cavaliers 88

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After draft-day nightmare, Lewis living a dream

By TIM KORTE

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Back in 1998, Rashard Lewis was projected as an NBA lottery pick coming out of the University of South Carolina. He was projected to the second round, plummeting into tears as he waited near the stage on draft night.

"Probably one of the worst days of my entire life," Lewis said. "It felt like my dream was being shattered right before my eyes."

Well, toss the hankie and check

out the Seattle SuperSonics forward today. Lewis is being his first All-Star Game after averaging 20.4 points, a career-best, and 5.5 rebounds a game.

"It's something I've been trying to do since I've been in the league," Lewis said. "I guess I just had to wait my turn."

After seven years, the 25-year-old held to Denver after the Sonics' (35-15) post the NBA's fourth-best record.

Lewis wasn't among the top 10 in All-Star voting by fans for West-

ern Conference forwards. The coaches, who select reserves, felt Lewis deserved to go.

"He's worked hard. He has improved," Seattle coach Nate McMillan said. "I've seen the growth, the improvement, the maturity. He's understanding the game better. I think he's earned the right to be on the All-Star team."

Sonics officials waited patiently for Lewis to fulfill his potential, setting the All-Star Game as a goal. In the summer of 2002, he signed a seven-year contract worth up to

\$75 million with incentives.

"I felt there was more pressure but also more freedom to be myself and play my game," Lewis said. "At the same time, I knew I'd have to produce more and that the team had confidence in me to be one of the main guys."

After star Gary Payton was traded in February 2003, McMillan called more plays down the stretch for Lewis. The youngster's confidence grew, and he formed a comfortable fit with Ray Allen, acquired in the Payton deal.

Bookie League rosters

To be played Friday, Feb. 18 (inferred, will not play)

Bookie League
Tony Allen, G, Chicago
Lionel Derry, F, Chicago
Ben Gordon, G, Orlando
Andre Iguodala, F, Philadelphia
Dwight Howard, F, Orlando
Ericka Klayton, F, Charlotte
Quentin Richardson, G, Seattle
Ben Udrih, G, San Antonio

Bookie League
Carmelo Anthony, F, Denver
Antonio Davis, F, Miami
Antonio Haskins, F, Miami
LeBron James, F, Cleveland
Josh Howard, F, Dallas
LeBron James, F, Cleveland
Josh Howard, F, Dallas
LeBron James, F, Cleveland
Josh Howard, F, Dallas

Bookie League
Dwyane Wade, G, Miami
Dwyane Wade, G, Miami
Dwyane Wade, G, Miami
Dwyane Wade, G, Miami

Bookie League
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Bookie League
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Hokies stun No. 7 Duke

By HANK KURZ JR.

The Associated Press

BLACKSBURG, Va. — Zebian Dowdell and his Virginia Tech teammates talked a lot about not being intimidated by Duke and forgetting their lopsided loss on the Blue Devils' home court just 18 days earlier.

The Hokies took the message to heart, and when Dowdell made a three-pointer with 14.6 seconds to play, Virginia Tech won, No. 7 Duke 67-65 Thursday night.

"Now we belong," Dowdell said of the Hokies, in their first season in the Atlantic Coast Conference. "I mean, they have to take us serious now."

"Whether they like it or not, we're here."

The victory was one of the biggest in Hokies history, and came against the most unlikely opponent — the one with the reputation for working hard.

Behind 14 points and 18 rebounds from Coleman Collins, Virginia Tech outbounded Duke 49-32. The Hokies got J.J. Redick in foul trouble for the first time this season and they blocked 12 shots, making All-America candidates Redick and Shelden Williams work extra hard for shots.

"It's all about hustle and effort and attitude," Redick said. "You've got to go make it happen, and Virginia Tech made it happen tonight."

The Hokies (13-10, 6-6) ended a three-game losing streak and pulled into a three-way tie for fourth in the league with Maryland and Miami. The Blue Devils (18-4, 9-4), who beat Virginia Tech 100-65 less than three weeks ago, lost their second in a row.

"It's almost beyond words," second-year Hokies coach Seth



Duke guard Sean Dockery (15) struggles with Virginia Tech forward Coleman Collins (33) for possession of the ball on Thursday.

Greenberg said, "and anyone who knows me, to be beyond words is pretty hard for me."

The finish was frantic, with Redick hitting a three-pointer with 22.9 seconds left to give the Blue Devils a 65-64 lead, and Dowdell coming back with a jumper from the right wing that caused the sellout crowd to erupt.

After timeouts by each team, Duke inbounded the ball with 4.9 seconds left and Redick fed Daniel Ewing for a three-point try from right of the key that missed, bringing hundreds of fans rushing onto the court.

"Duke is Duke," Greenberg said, struggling to explain his emotions. "Ten Final Fours. Everything good you can think about college basketball, Duke epitomizes. To me, they're the Yankees, and I'm a Yankee fan."

Carlos Dixon led the Hokies with 18 points and more than held his own against Redick, who

scored 19 but missed nine of 16 shots. Jamon Gordon added 17 points and had four blocks, and Dowdell scored 11.

"We just showed them what we're all about," Dixon said. "We knew we could play with them the first 5 minutes of the game. We had to just keep fighting and keep fighting and we did."

Collins, just 18, also blocked five shots.

Shelden Williams had 16 points and Ewing had 13 for Duke.

Redick brought the Blue Devils back to 60-60 on a drive with 3:05 left. After Jeff King, a football tight end who joined the team after the season, made a baby hook to get the Hokies back in front, Williams scored inside to tie it again, setting up the thrilling finish.

Collins, 10-for-10 from the line in a game earlier this year, missed two with 1:11 left, but Redick missed a 17-footer at the other end.

Cardinals' late rally holds off Marquette

The Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — When the Louisville Cardinals found themselves down by 11 points to Marquette with 5:38 left, they didn't think of turning to their prolific offense to bail them out of another upset.

Top 25 roundup

"We had to win this game with defense, not offense," Cardinals coach Rick Pitino said after Francisco Garcia's three-pointer with 2.6 seconds left capped a 14-0 run that gave Louisville (22-4, 10-2 Conference USA) a 64-61 victory Thursday night.

The Cardinals clamped down on the Golden Eagles, who turned the ball over once and missed three free throws, three three-pointers, a jumper and two layups on their final nine possessions.

"We just kept digging in on defense," said Garcia, who scored 16 of his 18 points in the second half, helping the 12th-ranked Cardinals avoid their second loss in three games.

Travis Dierzer's three-pointer at the buzzer bounced off the rim.

"You couldn't ask for a better shot. I just missed it, missed it bad. It was the story of my night," said Dierzer, who also clanked two layups off the rim in the final minutes, finishing 2-for-16 from the floor in what the senior called his worst college performance.

"They played good defense and we missed some layups. I missed some layups. I'm supposedly the best player on the floor. I should be able to make layups."

The Golden Eagles tried to

run the shot clock down in the final 5 minutes, and they ended up with hurried shots instead of good looks.

"It's feast or famine sometimes when you do that," Pitino said.

No. 10 Arizona 92, Oregon 67: Salim Stoudamire shook off a slow start to score 22 points and the host Wildcats made 21 of 30 shots in the second half.

Channing Frye scored 19 points and blocked a career-high seven shots in Arizona's fifth consecutive victory. Hassan Adams scored 17, 12 in the second half, and Chris Rodgers had 11 points and a career-best nine assists for the Pac-10-leading Wildcats.

Arizona (22-4, 12-2 Pac-10) was 20-for-26 in the second half before coach Lute Olson emptied his bench with three minutes to play.

No. 13 Gonzaga 90, San Diego 73: At Spokane, Wash., Derek Ravino scored 29 points as Gonzaga retained first place in the West Coast Conference.

J.P. Batista added 19 points for Gonzaga (20-4, 10-2 WCC), which won seven games in a row and reached 20 victories for the eighth season in a row. Gonzaga is 35-0 at home when ranked and has a 23-game winning streak at home, third-longest in the nation.

No. 25 Villanova 66, Seton Hall 52: East Rutherford, N.J., Curtis Sumpter scored 25 points, hitting the key baskets late to beat the Wildcats (16-6, 6-5 Big East) to their fourth victory in five games.

Randy Foye and Mike Nardi each had 10 points for Villanova. Andre Sweet had 11 points for Seton Hall (11-11, 3-8).

One: Illinois finds right balance while remaining undefeated

ONE, FROM BACK PAGE

"We don't have THE star," coach Bruce Weber said. "We have balance, we have unselfishness, and that makes us more of a team."

The Illini certainly don't lack for personality. They're a first-class talent behind Devon Williams' stout gameface, and his Weber imitation is so perfect it even fools teammates sometimes.

"It's so funny," Luther Head said, chuckling. "He's got it down pat, from the smile to the expressions to everything."

Head is a Pentecostal minister — his teammates call him "The Rev" — who still finds time during the season to speak to church groups. Brown is a former quarterback whose dazzling quickness earned him the moniker "The One-Man Fast Break," and teammates say he's often a ring-leader for their social outings.

"We've got a lot of characters on this team," Williams said.

The Illini figured out a while ago that their sum is far better than any of their parts, off and on the court.

"With other teams, you can focus on one guy. With us, you can't focus on just one guy because other people will beat you,"

forward James Augustine said. "When one player's not playing well, everybody else steps it up and helps out the team." Just check out their stats. None of the Illini ranks in the top 50 in the country in scoring, but all five starters average in double figures. All five players have been high scorer in a game and five have been the top rebounder.

Most telling, they rank third in the country with 19.2 assists per game while committing only 10.8 turnovers.

"We like being up there in the top assists in the nation, and top in assist-to-turnover ratio," Williams said. "That's a big key to our success, how unselfish we are. No one guy wants to be a superstar."

No one's a better example of that than Williams. He might be Illinois' best pure player, the preseason pick as Big Ten player of the year, candidate for the Wooden Award and someone who's capable of going off for 30 points on any night. Yet he's fourth on the team in scoring, his average is down slightly from last year and he's the only starter who has yet to win Big Ten player of the week honors. In the Feb. 6 game against Indiana, he scored one point, a free throw with 2:15 remaining.

He is, however, ranked 12th in the coun-

try with 6.9 assists a game. With 178 assists already, he's on pace to break the school's season record. And that Indiana game? He had 11 assists, one shy of his season and career high.

"I'm having a great season. My team's 26-0 and I'm the point guard on my team," Williams said, a touch of defiance creeping into his voice. "I'm really not worried about myself. I'm worried about wins. If we get wins, that's all I'm concerned with."

Coaches in every sport at every level beg, plead and prod their players for that kind of selflessness and unity. For the Illini, though, it comes naturally.

The team has been unusually close since the juniors arrived on campus. Several already knew each other from growing up in the Chicago area, and the rest were quickly welcomed into the fold.

"They'd see movies together. Go bowling. Play cards or Monopoly at someone's apartment."

Bill Self's sudden departure for Kansas in April 2003 brought them even closer. The Illini love Weber now, but adjusting to a new coach is always tough, and the players had to lean on each other.

"They're even tight with each other's families. When Augustine came out of the lock-

er room last weekend, Head's aunt greeted him with a hug. Head made sure to say hello to the Lowell mom, complimenting her on her hair."

"I've been on teams that had groups that were close, but as far as mixing and matching, I've never been on a team that's been so close all the time," said senior Jack Ingram, who transferred from Tulsa before the 2002-03 season. "I could go hang out with any of the guys and feel just as comfortable as if I was with my roommate."

That closeness has made it easier to deal with the pressure and publicity that comes with being No. 1. If someone is slacking off or not doing something right, his teammates will call him on it. There's so much teasing and teasing that it's impossible for anyone to get a big head.

Not even Weber is immune. When his cell phone started ringing after a national TV appearance recently, he knew without looking it was his players calling to rally him.

"We just get along," Williams said. "We are a family. That's how they feel."

And they know how lucky they are — regardless of how close they are.

"It's a very, very unique team," senior center Nick Smith said. "It's not something you see all the time."

Scame ol' Bonds expected in S.F.

Red Sox-Yankees sniping returns as baseball opens spring training

BY RONALD BLUM

The Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — San Francisco Giants manager Felipe Alou understands there will be even more attention on his team this spring because of the steroid suspicion surrounding Barry Bonds.

"If you're good, you're good — whether it is the era of the steroids, or the cigars, or the hot dog, or the beer, or the amphetamine, or the red juice, or the whiskey," Alou said as his team reported Thursday in Scottsdale, Ariz. "He's been through the death of Bobby, his dad, along with the steroid stuff. I expect for him to just show up and swing the bat and hit."

In Mesa, Ariz., Chicago Cubs manager Dusty Baker said he reached out to Sammy Sosa after the outfielder was traded to Baltimore, seeking to understand why their relationship came apart at the end of last season.

"I got hold of him and we had a short conversation. I wished him well. I did ask him, I said, 'Hey, man, I'm still bewildered about what happened and why,' and he didn't really have an answer," Baker said Thursday before Chicago's first workout of the spring.

"He said, 'It's in the past, good luck and God bless you.' And that was the extent of the conversation."

■ Curt Schilling arrived at the Boston Red Sox camp in Fort Myers, Fla., on Thursday, saying he hopes to recover from ankle surgery in time to pitch Boston's April 3 opener at New York's Yankee Stadium, possibly against former Arizona teammate Randy Johnson.

After Schilling and Pedro Mar-

tiniez helped lead Boston to its first title in 86 years, Martinez left to sign with the New York Mets. Schilling said he enjoyed pitching with Pedro a lot more than Martinez liked pitching alongside him.

"I think that was pretty obvious at the end, and not what was happening. But I guess when you look at what he said afterwards, it was obvious that it wasn't as fun as it was for me."

Schilling said, "When the playoffs came and he made the comment about somebody having

to have a lot of guts to come up and tell him he wasn't going to pitch Game 1, that kind of told me how we were at."

■ New Boston teammate David Wells, who helped New York win two AL pennants and one World Series, got right into the swing of the Red Sox-Yankees sniping, saying Alex Rodriguez "has to earn it" and admitting he didn't get along with Yankees manager Joe Torre.

"I remember reading the press conference or something when he went there," Wells said of A-Rod. "He said: 'When we.' He said a 'we' in his comment about like he's won like three or four rings with them and he hadn't, and that kind of disturbed me."

"He shouldn't put himself in that category," Wells added. "You've got to earn it. It's like he's been there the whole time. But you can't take away what A-Rod has done for the game. He's a great player, and he will continue to be a great player."

Wells remembered difficult times with Torre and pitching coach Mel Stottlemyre.

"I've never had a good relationship with Joe," he said. "We've



Washington Nationals pitcher Joe Morgan fields a ground ball during a drill on the first day of spring training for the former Montreal Expos.

had a few run-ins and Mel Stottlemyre as well, and Mel's probably the best pitching coach I probably ever had. But just when you have run-ins like that, it just leaves a sour taste, and who needs it?"

■ At the Yankees' camp, Randy Johnson playfully got into it, too. "In the Big Unit said he didn't think that merely by signing with the Yankees he'd join A-Rod as a target of the Red Sox and their fans."

"I haven't done anything to them," he said.

Not yet, but his job is to lead the Yankees to their first title since 2000 and deny the Red Sox a second straight World Series title.

"So they'll be mad at me if I pitch well against them? Bring it on then," he said, laughing.

■ In Viera, Fla., new Washington Nationals held their first workout for pitchers and catchers following the team's move from Montreal. Players more or less used to performing in a vacuum are having every throw filmed by seven television cameras.

"It was a little strange during stretch seeing everybody out there," reliever Joey Eischen said. "Being an Expo, being here

a long time, I've never seen that. I've been in a lot of other camps. I've been with 11 other pro teams. It would equate a little bit with the Yankees."

■ In Peoria, Ariz., new Seattle Mariners manager Mike Hargrove didn't like his cap as he watched his team work out for the first time. "The hat's killing me," he said with a laugh. "The person who designed these hats should be drawn and quartered, but the Seattle colors are nice. That part, I like."

■ In Lakeland, Fla., new Detroit Tigers closer Troy Percival was the first player to report, at 6:30 a.m. The Tigers also learned that reliever Ugueth Urbina would not be in camp until at least early next week. Urbina's mother disappeared Sept. 1 from her home in Urbina's native Caracas, Venezuela. A senior Venezuelan senior police official has confirmed news reports that the amount of ransom demanded was about \$3 million.

Urbina left the Tigers last September for Venezuela following his mother's disappearance. He has declined to comment on the case.

Woods' 67 leaves him two back in Nissan

By DOUG FERGUSON

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Tiger Woods tossed his putter some 40 feet toward his bag after going from the right fringe to the left fringe and making bogey. He took an angry swing after missing a short birdie putt. And he ended his round watching two putts burn the edge of the cup.

He still managed a 4-under-67, leaving him two shots behind Brian Davis of England after the first round of the Nissan Open.

Despite his career struggles at Riviera, Woods had a hard time finding the bright spot on what turned out to be a rainy day. "I putted like a fool today," Woods said. "It was an absolutely horrific day on the greens. But I'm hitting it great. If I would have just putted normal today, I probably would have shot an 8-under with not too much effort."

Davis made it around without too much effort.

The 29-year-old Englishman began his round with a 4-foot eagle on the par-5 first, finished with eight pars and signed for a 65 to take a one-shot lead over 16-year-old Darren Clarke and Brett Quigley.

"I've played a lot of links golf, and if you drop a shot, you start fighting it," Davis said.

He mentioned links golf on a couple of occasions. The wind was into his face along a stretch of holes on the front, then turned and played into his back on some of the closing holes — just like it does on some links courses in Britain when the tide changes.

The Nissan Open had a British feel in other areas — particularly the leader board.

Donald, another young Englishman, made three straight birdies on his back nine — twice with 30-foot putts — and was tied for the lead until his tee shot on No. 9 landed in a divot near the bunker, and he placed his approach into a bunker to close with a bogey.

Clarke is from Northern Ireland, and he got off to another strong start with one of several highlights in the first round at Riviera. On the par-3 sixth, famous for a bunker situated in the middle of the green, Clarke's 7-iron landed to the skirt of the fringe surrounding the bunker, then spun back into the cup for an ace.

"A little bit of a skill and a lot of luck," said one of "only seven at the right time."

Quigley had said of "only came back in one of only three birdies on the faded 18th hole, from nearly 50 feet just off the green, to join the group chasing Davis on what figures to be a wet weekend."

Adam Scott, Jose Coorees, Kevin Sutherland and two-time defending champion Mike Weir joined Woods at 67. The group at 68 included two-time Masters champion Jose Maria Olazabal and Steve Elkington, who won the 1995 PGA Championship at Riviera in a playoff.

Greenwell feels Canseco cheated him out of MVP

The Associated Press

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Mike Greenwell was runner-up in the American League MVP voting in 1988 and wants everyone to know why that happened: Jose Canseco, who won the award, cheated.

In his book released this week, Canseco discussed his steroid use and accused other players of using the illegal substance. His tainted success, Greenwell said Thursday, deprived other players of recognition and honors.

Greenwell spent his entire career as a Red Sox outfielder from 1985 through 1996 and hit .303. He was a teammate of Canseco for his last two seasons.

"I would have never said a word, but now that Jose's admit-



Briefs

ted he was using steroids during the time he beat me (for) the MVP, then I have a problem with that because, obviously, I wasn't playing on an even playing field," Greenwell said.

"He reaped a lot of rewards and a lot of benefits for being on an illegal drug and probably took something away from me that I never got to feel. So does it bother me? Absolutely."

Orlones sign Parrish

BALTIMORE — Left-hander John Parrish and the Baltimore Orioles agreed Thursday to a \$615,000, one-year contract.

Parrish was asked for a raise from \$320,000 to \$285,000, and the Orioles had offered \$575,000. An arbitration hearing was scheduled for Friday in Tampa, Fla.

Parrish was 6-3 with a 3.46 ERA in a career-high 56 games last year.

Nationals get broadcaster

WASHINGTON — Bonneville International Corp., which operates four stations in the Washington, D.C. market, pulled out a last-minute victory Thursday in the battle for broadcast rights to Washington Nationals games.

Financial terms of the one-year deal were not disclosed.

The Nationals will hire and pay the play-by-play broadcast team, said Joe Oxley, Bonneville's senior vice president, said.

Bonneville prevailed over Infinity Broadcasting, which carries Washington Redskins games, and Clear Channel, which broadcasts Washington Wizards games.

Mendoza rejoins Yankees

TAMPA, Fla. — Ramiro Mendoza returned to the New York Yankees on Thursday, agreeing to a minor league contract.

Mendoza, not expected to pitch until May following shoulder surgery, would get an \$850,000, one-year contract and have the chance to make \$95,000 in performance bonuses starting at 25 appearances.

Mendoza went 2-1 with a 3.52 ERA in 27 games last year with Boston after 10 years with the Yankees.

Chargers slap tag on Brees

The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — For a guy who wasn't expected to be in the last season, Drew Brees sure got a nice raise.

The San Diego Chargers used their franchise tag Thursday to lock up Brees and will offer him a one-year contract of just more than \$8 million. The quarterback made \$1.56 million in base pay last season, and led the Chargers out of the NFL's basement to the AFC West title with a 12-4 record.

The Chargers needed to put the tag on the NFL's comeback player of the year to keep him from leaving on an unrestricted free agent.

"Franchising him is a no-brainer because if we didn't, we wouldn't get any compensation, and he wouldn't be here, he'd be going to the airport," General Manager A.J. Smith said. "We want him to be our quarterback. I mean, a little bit over \$8 million for one year, for a quarterback, I think, tells you clearly what we think of his abilities."

Brees rebounded from a nightmare 2003 season to lead the



AP

Drew Brees, who made \$1.56 million last season and will earn just over \$8 million next season, was tagged as a non-exclusive franchise player, meaning he can negotiate with other teams.

Chargers to their first playoff berth in nine seasons. He also was voted to the Pro Bowl.

Brees has said he wants a long-term deal from the Chargers, but Smith said the team currently is not interested in offering one.

Brees, on vacation in Australia with his wife, said in a statement issued by the team that he was happy to remain in San Diego.

"We've built a solid foundation and I feel we can really make a run. I'm excited about being a part of that," Brees said.

His salary for 2005 is the average of the top five salaried quarterbacks from last season.

Brees was tagged as a non-exclusive franchise player, meaning he can negotiate with other teams. Should Brees receive an offer from another team, the Chargers can either match it or receive two first-round draft choices from that club as compensation for losing Brees.

Smith said he made it clear to Brees' agent, Tom Condon, that the Chargers will insist on two No. 1 picks. Condon plans to check other teams' interest in Brees.

The Chargers got Philip Rivers in a draft-day deal with the New York Giants and gave him a \$40 million contract. But Rivers missed half of training camp in a holdout and threw just eight passes all season.

The Chargers have freed about \$21 million in salary cap space for next season, which would allow them to fit in Brees and Rivers, who is due about \$3 million in base pay.

Jets franchise DE Abraham

HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. — Defensive end John Abraham was designated the New York Jets' franchise player on Friday with a one-year deal worth \$6.7 million.

Abraham was second on the Jets with 9½ sacks last season despite missing the team's final four games with a knee injury. He was voted to the Pro Bowl.

The franchise tag, the average of the salary for the NFL's top five defensive ends, allows the Jets to get two first-round draft choices for Abraham if he signs with another team.

Grantham hired as Browns defensive coordinator

CLEVELAND — Todd Grantham, who spent the past three seasons coaching Houston's defensive linemen, was hired as defensive coordinator of the Cleveland Browns on Thursday. The Texans played a 3-4 defense, the kind Crennel used with New England and wants to implement with the Browns.

Bruschini OK for ongoing stroke

Doctor says Patriots LB could probably resume playing

BY JIMMY GOLEN
The Associated Press

BOSTON — Details in an emergency call to police by his wife were an early indication that New England Patriots linebacker Tedy Bruschi suffered a mild stroke.

Bruschi, 31, a mainstay for three Super Bowl championships and one of the most popular Patriots, has been hospitalized since Wednesday after experiencing temporary numbness, blurred vision and headaches. The team said Thursday he was doing well after the stroke.

"It has been determined that these symptoms were the results of a mild stroke," team spokesman Stacy James said. "Tedy is in good condition and, as always, his spirits are high. He is walking and talking normally and assured that he would like to thank everyone for keeping him and his family in their thoughts and prayers."

In a phone call by Bruschi's wife, Heidi, to 911 on Wednesday, she said, "He's having blurred vision, numbness on the right side of his body." He was admitted to Massachusetts General Hospital.

The Patriots said Bruschi could be released from the hospital on Friday.

"The outpouring of support has been overwhelming and the Bruschi family is very appreciative," James said.

An estimated 700,000 people per year in the United States suffer stroke strokes. While broken blood vessels can cause them, a vast majority result from clots that block the brain's arteries.

Dr. David Liebeskind, associate neurology director of the UCLA Stroke Center in Los Angeles, said Bruschi's reported state of health indicated he had a good chance of recovery — and could possibly resume his playing career.

"Based on the fact that he's walking and talking, in a 31-year-old, it sounds like he could be asked to play" football again, Liebeskind told The Associated Press. "A lot of people who have strokes while young tend to have no effects later. ... But things could change quickly. If he happens to have some numbness that persists, that may affect his playing."

Liebeskind emphasized that a battery of tests performed while Bruschi was hospitalized will determine the actual diagnosis.

Brian Mullen of the NFL's New York Islanders attempted a comeback two years after suffering a mild stroke and undergoing surgery to correct the heart problem that caused it in 1993. He had a seizure during his training and retired when no team would take a chance on him.

Houston Astros pitcher J.R. Richard, one of the most dominant right-handers of the late 1970s, had his career cut short when he suffered a blockage-caused stroke in 1980 at age 30. His comeback attempt was also unsuccessful.

Unlike heart attacks, strokes usually cause no pain, so the warning signs often are missed by victims and people around them.

Symptoms include sudden weakness or numbness, dimness or loss of vision, difficulty or inability to speak and severe headaches.

A nine-year NFL veteran, the versatile Bruschi has been a star of the defense that helped the Patriots win three of the past four Super Bowls, including a 24-21 win over the Philadelphia Eagles on Feb. 6 in which he had an interception.

Bruschi was selected as the AFC's Defensive Player of the Week three times, including the first-round playoff victory over the Indianapolis Colts. A second-team Associated Press All-Pro selection, he ranked second on the team with 128 tackles and tied for second with three interceptions.

He also had two fumble recoveries and 20-3 playoff win over the Colts.

On Sunday, Bruschi played in his first Pro Bowl.

Associated Press writer Ryan Pearson in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

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Umors swirl that NHL talks might reopen to save season

BY HELEN ELLIOTT
AND CHRIS FOSTER

Los Angeles Times

NEW YORK — Wayne Gretzky and Mario Lemieux performed magnificent feats on the ice. Now, they're trying to do something more improbable: resurrect the NHL season, which was canceled Wednesday by Commissioner Gary Bettman.

Well-placed sources said Thursday that Gretzky, managing partner of the Phoenix Coyotes, and Lemieux, player-owner of the Pittsburgh Penguins, spoke to Bettman in an effort to explore whether the season can be salvaged. Sources said Trevor Linden, president of the NHL Players' Association, and Mike Garner, the union's director of business relations, met with Bettman in New York on Thursday while players expressed concern about the failed negotiations to the union's Toronto office.

The activity, several sources said, may result in players pressuring union chief Bob Goodenow to propose a deal that would include a salary cap set from \$45 million to \$46 million, and a prohibitive tax on the union's pay offer, made on Tuesday, set the cap at \$49 million; the NHL's final offer, also made Tuesday, was for a \$25 million cap that wasn't linked to league-wide revenue.

Bettman and other NHL executives were contacted Thursday by

a few owners who expressed anxiety about the economic damage a cancellation might cause. Bettman was said to be out of his New York office most of the day and unavailable for comment.

Billy Daly, the NHL's chief legal officer, said Thursday he and Bettman had spoken to many owners and players in the days preceding the cancellation but that he had not been contacted by the union about reviving the season. "I'd be happy to take that call and happy to have that problem," he said, "but so far, no one."

Sources said the call might be made Friday. Gretzky told a radio station he had not been involved in "formal conversations" but said he had discussed the league's predicament with Lemieux. He also said he had had extensive talks with Shane Doan, the Coyotes' union representative and one of about a half-dozen players who teamed with some prominent owners, owners and general managers to kick-start the flagging negotiations last week.

A source said Gretzky had broached the idea of a salary-cap compromise. Bettman didn't reject it but said the union would have to make such an offer.

"There is a slight chance that this could work," said a source familiar with the back-channel efforts. "But it is a chance."

Bettman on Wednesday said

the NHL would have lost money for two years if the union had accepted the league's proposed \$42.5 million cap, but he would have taken short-term losses to put players back on the ice and generate revenue again.

"I would love nothing more than to strike while the iron's hot so to speak, and take advantage of whatever little momentum we were able to gain in the last week," Daly said.

Ted Saskin, senior director of the NHLPA, said players had not pushed the union to make a season-saving deal.

"There are no back-channel talks," Saskin said by phone. "What we're hearing are rumors about various owners and general managers who are looking for some kind of P.A. [press agent] negotiations because they are not satisfied with the way Gary ended the negotiations..."

"Saskin said by phone they would be willing to look at a higher number. We wish he would have said that in the negotiating process." The question now is whether the P.A. is going to give in to the pressure, said a source. "The pressure is significant, coming from all quarters, that the P.A. and the executive committee should put in a last-ditch offer."

Oversteering in '05

With new sponsor, new scoring in place, France plans few changes

BY MIKE HARRIS

The Associated Press

A DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. After a year filled with change, the 2005 season in NASCAR's top stock car series will have a familiar feel.

There was plenty of skepticism — and even some outrage from fans — when new chairman Brian France changed the points structure last year and ushered in a playoff-style system. But it worked nearly to perfection, meaning there will be less upheaval this year.

The first 26 races kept fan interest at an all-time high and put drivers and teams on edge like never before in midseason. Then the 10-race Chase for the Championship went down to the final lap of the season, with Kurt Busch hanging on to beat Jimmie Johnson by eight points and Jeff Gordon by 16 in the closest finish in the sport's history.

Other than the anger of traditionalists, who don't like any change, the biggest gripe from fans and teams was that only 10 drivers made it into the playoff. The rules allow any driver within 400 points of the leader to be included, but 11th-place Jamie McMurray made that mark by 15 points, prompting critics to say it should be changed to 450 or 500 points.

"If it isn't broke, I don't think we have to fix it," France said. "We're always looking at every-



Last season, his first as NASCAR chairman and CEO, Brian France oversaw sweeping change in Nextel Cup that included a new title sponsor and a new playoff-style system to determine the series champion.

thing we do to see if it can be made better somehow, but there's no need to change anything in the Chase right now."

The new system is not the only thing firmly established as this season opens.

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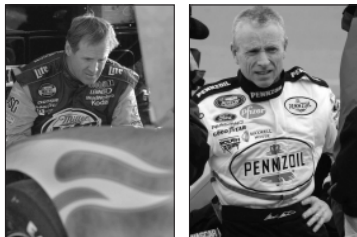


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AP photos

Rusty Wallace, left, and Mark Martin, right, who are racing in their final full seasons, will be sentimental favorites to win the Nextel Cup championship. Wallace won the title in 1989. Martin is a four-time runner-up.

By now, everyone is used to calling it the Nextel Cup series, and France has settled in after his first full season as chairman and CEO.

"I don't think there are going to be a lot more surprises this year," four-time Cup champion Jeff Gordon said. "Hardly anybody slips and calls it Winston Cup any more, and we all know now what the Chase is all about."

But France is not one to stand completely still. There will be a few changes in 2005.

Rear spoilers have been lowered and softer tires will be used at intermediate tracks such as Las Vegas, California, Atlanta and Charlotte this year. The rule changes are intended to put more control back into the hands

of drivers by taking away downforce and making the cars harder to drive.

There was near panic by some teams about the changes and how they would affect racing. Most of that subsided after pre-season tests two weeks ago at Las Vegas and California.

Rusty Wallace, a proponent of the spoiler and tire changes for several years, was a little disappointed.

"I really didn't feel a whole lot of difference," Wallace said. "We'll probably feel it a lot more in racing with other cars than we did in testing, where we were mostly alone on the track."

"I still think it's going to make for better racing."

NASCAR also has changed the

2005 Nextel Cup schedule

- Feb. 20 — Daytona 500, Daytona International Speedway, Daytona Beach, Fla.
- Feb. 27 — Auto Club 500, California Speedway, Fontana, Calif.
- March 13 — UAW-DaimlerChrysler 400, Las Vegas Motor Speedway, Las Vegas, Nev.
- March 20 — Golden Corral 500, Atlanta Motor Speedway, Atlanta, Ga.
- April 3 — Food City 500, Bristol Motor Speedway, Bristol, Tenn.
- April 10 — Advance Auto Parts 500, Martinsville Speedway, Martinsville, Va.
- April 17 — Samsung/Radio Shack 500, Texas Motor Speedway, Fort Worth, Texas
- April 23 — Subway Fresh 500, Phoenix International Raceway, Phoenix, Ariz.
- May 1 — Aaron's 400, Talladega Superspeedway, Talladega, Ala.
- May 7 — Dodge Charger 500, Darlington Raceway, Darlington, S.C.
- May 14 — Chevy American Revolution 400, Richmond International Raceway, Richmond, Va.
- May 21 — Nextel All-Star Challenge, Lowe's Motor Speedway, Concord, N.C.
- May 29 — Coca-Cola 600, Lowe's Motor Speedway, Concord, N.C.
- June 6 — MBNA 400, Dover International Speedway, Dover, Del.
- June 13 — Michigan 400, Pocono Raceway, Long Pond, Pa.
- June 20 — Dodge Avenger 300, Infineon Raceway, Sonoma, Calif.
- July 3 — Ford 400, Daytona International Speedway, Daytona Beach, Fla.
- July 10 — Chicagoland 500, Chicagoland Speedway, Joliet, Ill.
- July 17 — New England 300, New Hampshire International Speedway, Loudon, N.H.
- July 24 — Pennsylvania 500, Pocono Raceway, Long Pond, Pa.
- Aug. 7 — Brickyard 400, Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Indianapolis
- Aug. 14 — Sirius Satellite Radio at the Glen, Watkins Glen International, Watkins Glen, N.Y.
- Aug. 21 — GE Marketplace 400, Michigan International Speedway, Brooklyn, Mich.
- Sept. 4 — Goodyear 400, Bristol Motor Speedway, Bristol, Tenn.
- Sept. 11 — Nextel 500, California Speedway, Fontana, Calif.
- Sept. 18 — Chevy Monte Carlo 400, Richmond International Raceway, Richmond, Va.
- Sept. 25 — Pennzoil 400, New Hampshire International Speedway, Loudon, N.H.
- Sept. 25 — MBNA 400, Dover International Speedway, Dover, Del.
- Oct. 2 — Talladega 500, Talladega Superspeedway, Talladega, Ala.
- Oct. 9 — Banquet 400, Kansas Speedway, Kansas City, Mo.
- Oct. 15 — UAW-GM Quality 500, Lowe's Motor Speedway, Concord, N.C.
- Oct. 23 — Subway 500, Martinsville Speedway, Martinsville, Va.
- Oct. 30 — Bass Pro Shops MBNA 500, Atlanta Motor Speedway, Atlanta, Ga.
- Nov. 6 — Circle K 400, Texas Motor Speedway, Fort Worth, Texas
- Nov. 13 — Phoenix International Raceway, Phoenix, Ariz.
- Nov. 20 — Ford 400, Homestead-Miami Speedway, Homestead, Fla.

qualifying procedure to assure well-sponsored teams that run at each of the 36 Cup races make the lineup.

Under the old system, with car owner points — so-called provisions — determining only the last seven positions in the lineup, NASCAR and several top sponsors were embarrassed to have guests show up at a race where their car had not made the field.

Beginning with the season-opening Daytona 500 on Feb. 20, the top 35 teams in car-owner points will be guaranteed starting spots in the lineup, with the rest of the 43-car field filled from qualifying speeds.

In another change, at tracks where Friday qualifying is not considered a big draw, time trials will be moved to Saturday and the cars will be inspected by NASCAR immediately after making their qualifying run. They will have to start the race on the same tires and with the same fuel load with which they qualified.

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NexTel Cup driver profiles



John Andretti
No. 14
Ford

Sponsor: Aplus/Victory Brand.
Team: ppc Racing.
Andretti is back in a full-time race this year after making just one starts last season. ... Said he'd wait for a quality seat to open before coming back. ... Joined ppc to team with Victory Brand cigarettes — the first tobacco sponsorship in Cup racing since Winston pulled out as the series sponsor in 2003.



Jeff Burton
No. 31
Chevrolet

Sponsor: Cingular.
Team: Richard Childress Racing.
Left Rough Racing mid-way through '04 to join RCR, and in the 34 races with new team he finished 15th or better 11 times. ... Has 37 Cup starts and is looking to become a weekly force in the series.



Kurt Busch
No. 97
Ford

Sponsor: Sharpie/Rubensaid.
Team: Roush Racing.
The defending NexTel Cup champion, had three wins, one pole, 10 top fives and 21 top 10s last season. ... Was the seventh of 10 drivers to win the Chase, then moved into to take the lead for winning the first playoff race. ... Had won his second consecutive Cup title.



Greg Biffle
No. 16
Ford

Sponsor: Army National Guard/Subway.
Team: Roush Racing.
Biffle finished 17th in points and was the only full-time driver not to make the Chase for the Championship. ... Had two wins in the season finale at Homestead. ... Also won the full Busch Series schedule, winning five times and finishing third in points.



Dave Blaney
No. 07
Chevrolet

Sponsor: Jack Daniel's.
Team: Richard Childress Racing.
Finished last season 38th in points after running a limited schedule in a select few NASCAR races. ... Hired by RCR to pilot the first car to carry hard-core full-time sponsorship since NASCAR lifted self-imposed spirits ban in November.



Mike Bliss
No. 0
Chevrolet

Sponsor: NetZero.
Team: Haas CNC Racing.
Wins a regular in the Busch Series last season, winning once and finishing fifth in points. ... Replaced Ward Burton near the end of the season. ... Had two top-10 finishes in four starts.



Dale Earnhardt Jr.
No. 8
Chevrolet

Sponsor: Budweiser.
Team: Dale Earnhardt Inc.
NASCAR's most popular driver finished fifth in points with six wins. ... Suffered serious burns while practicing for an endurance race, and was downed 25 days by the injury. ... Was the center of controversy for causing an accident that took out championship contenders Tony Stewart and Jeremy Mayfield in the first playoff race.



Carl Edwards
No. 99
Ford

Sponsor: Office Depot.
Team: Roush Racing.
Was supposed to be the heir apparent to Mark Martin's ride, but was bumped up when Burton defected to RCR. ... Spent most of the 2004 season in the Craftsman Truck Series. ... Had 13 Cup starts, with five top 10s. ... Not eligible to run for rookie of the year because he ran too many races last season.



Bill Elliott
No. 91
Dodge

Sponsor: Sharpie Tools.
Team: Evernham Motorsports.
Only runs a partial schedule. ... Started only six races after partially retiring in 2003. ... Drove a development car for Tony Stewart, finishing in the top 10 once. ... Plans to run as many as 15 races.



Jeff Gordon
No. 24
Chevrolet

Sponsor: DuPont.
Team: Hendrick Motorsports.
Finished in points with five wins last season. ... Was in the hunt for his fifth series title, but fell 16 points short of Kurt Busch. ... Only two drivers won more races than Gordon had a six-race stretch in which he won three times and finished in the top five in the other three.



Robby Gordon
No. 7
Chevrolet

Sponsor: Harrah's/Menards.
Team: Robby Gordon Motorsports.
Finished 23rd in points last season driving for Richard Childress Racing. ... Was the center of controversy for causing an accident that took out championship contenders Tony Stewart and Jeremy Mayfield in the first playoff race.



Jeff Green
No. 43
Dodge

Sponsor: Cheerios.
Team: Petty Enterprises.
Was 38th in points with no wins last season. ... Led only one top 10 all season and didn't post his first win until the Oct. 24 event at Martinsville. ... Finished 25th or worse 21 times and missed the championship by eight points. ... During the Chase, Johnson won four times in a five-race stretch.



Bobby Hamilton Jr.
No. 32
Chevrolet

Sponsor: Tide.
Team: PPI Motorsports.
Had a falling out with his Busch Series team at mid-season and turned his back to NASCAR, taking over the No. 32 seat from Ricky Craven. The Hamilton. ... Started 17 Cup events and his best finish was 11th.



Kevin Harvick
No. 29
Chevrolet

Sponsor: GM Goodwrench.
Team: Richard Childress Racing.
Probably the most disappointing driver in 2004. ... Finished 14th in points, failed in a race and finished to make the Chase. ... His average finish was only 16th.



Dale Jarrett
No. 99
Ford

Sponsor: UPS.
Team: Robert Yates Racing.
Finished 15th in points with no wins. ... Briefly tried to make a comeback in the Chase, but failed with a mediocre performance in the cutoff race. ... Has 21 career wins and is a former series champion.



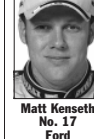
Jimmie Johnson
No. 48
Chevrolet

Sponsor: Lowe's.
Team: Hendrick Motorsports.
Finished second in points with a series-best eight wins. ... Led the series in victories and top-five finishes and missed the championship by eight points. ... During the Chase, Johnson won four times in a five-race stretch.



Kasey Kahne
No. 9
Dodge

Sponsor: Dodge Dealers.
Team: Evernham Motorsports.
Finished 13th in points with no wins, but came close with five consecutive top fives and missed the championship by eight points. ... Won rookie of the year honors.



Matt Kenseth
No. 17
Ford

Sponsor: DeWalt Power Tools.
Team: Roush Racing.
The 2003 series champion finished eighth in points with two wins. ... Won both of his races at the start of the year by winning two consecutive top fives. ... Was in the top five in all 34 races. ... Took over for Dale Jarrett as driver of the No. 17 Ford at Dover sent Kenseth spiraling in the standings.



Travis Kvapil
No. 77
Dodge

Sponsor: Kodak.
Team: Frank Lampson.
Kvapil made three Cup starts last season. ... Finished regular in the Craftsman Truck Series. ... Finishing eighth in points with three wins and two top fives. ... Took over for Dale Jarrett as driver of the No. 77 Dodge at Dover sent Kvapil spiraling in the standings.



Bobby Labonte
No. 18
Chevrolet

Sponsor: Interstate Batteries.
Team: Joe Gibbs Racing.
Finished 12th in points with one win. ... Was solidly in the top 10 in points at midseason, but a poor second half ended any chance Labonte had to make the Chase. ... The 2003 series champion finished in the top 10 only twice in the final 18 races. ... Led only 44 laps in 2004.



Terry Labonte
No. 44
Chevrolet

Sponsor: Kellogg's.
Team: Hendrick Motorsports.
Was 26th in points with no wins in his last full season in Cup racing. ... Two-time series champion struggled except for mid-season stretch that saw him finish in the top 10 in six of 11 races. ... Will run 10 races in 2005 and 2006, then retire.



Jason Leffler
No. 11
Chevrolet

Sponsor: Federal Express.
Team: Joe Gibbs Racing.
After a failed attempt in 2003, concentrated on the Craftsman Truck Series. ... Ran 27 of the 34 Busch Series races finishing 12th in points with one victory.



Sterling Marlin
No. 40
Dodge

Sponsor: Coors Light.
Team: Chip Ganassi Racing.
Finished last season 21st in points with no wins. ... Hasn't been able to regain the form that saw him win championships before a serious neck injury. ... Gets a new crew chief this year in Steve Boyer, a former engineer for Goodyear.



Mark Martin
No. 6
Ford

Sponsor: Pfizer/Viagra.
Team: Roush Racing.
Finished fourth in points with one win. ... Called it one of the most mentally and physically exhausting seasons he has ever endured. ... Qualified for the Chase with a late surge. ... Has announced that he will retire at the end of this season.



Jeremy Mayfield
No. 19
Dodge

Sponsor: Dodge Dealers.
Team: Evernham Motorsports.
Finished 10th in points. ... Won at Richmond — the only victory for the Chase — to qualify for NASCAR's brightest young stars and the top 10 in points in the final 10 races.



Jamie McMurray
No. 42
Dodge

Sponsor: Havoline.
Team: Chip Ganassi Racing.
Missed the Chase, and finished 11th in points. ... Won a race, but over the final 10 of the season he posted eight top-10 finishes. ... One of NASCAR's brightest young stars and an early favorite for success this season.



Casey Mears
No. 41
Dodge

Sponsor: Target.
Team: Chip Ganassi Racing.
Easily the most improved driver last season. ... Finished 23rd in points and won two poles, including one at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, with his uncle Rick, won four Indy 500s. ... Moved up 13 spots in points from 2003 to 2004.



Joe Nemechek
No. 01
Chevrolet

Sponsor: U.S. Army.
Team: MBV/MB2 Motor Sports.
Was 19th in points last season with one win. ... Nemechek landed in the No. 01 Chevrolet after Jerry Nadeau was seriously injured in a wreck. ... He won back-to-back poles late in the season. ... Finished in the top 10 in six of the final 10 races.



Ryan Newman
No. 12
Dodge

Sponsor: Alltel.
Team: Penske Racing South.
Finished seventh in points with two wins and nine poles. ... Strong starting positions didn't always translate into solid finishes. ... He failed to finish nine races and had three runs of 30th or worse in the Chase. ... Sent exactly buddies with teammate Rusty Wallace, who makes information-sharing shaky at best.



Kyle Petty
No. 45
Dodge

Sponsor: Georgia Pacific.
Team: Petty Enterprises.
Was 32nd in points with no wins and top 10s. ... One of NASCAR's brightest young stars and an early favorite for success this season. ... His average finish was only slightly better at 27.6.



Scott Riggs
No. 10
Chevrolet

Sponsor: Valvoline.
Team: MBV/MB2 Motor Sports.
Was 26th in points with no wins. ... Came to NexTel Cup after two strong seasons in the Busch Series, but had a tough time in his rookie campaign. ... Best finish was fifth in June.

SPORTS



T-wolves finding new enthusiasm under McHale, Page 24

All for one



Illinois' Deron Williams, center, and his teammates get ready to take on Wisconsin on Feb. 12. The team, in its 11th straight week at No. 1, calls itself a family and says having fun doing a lot of things together off the court shows how well they fit together.

BY NANCY ARMOUR
The Associated Press

With no 'star',
Illini finds
off-court
bonding
contributes
to team unity,
successful run
atop rankings

The folks at Old Orchard Lanes have gotten used to seeing Illinois basketball players stop by over the years. It's usually only a player or two at a time, enough to draw attention at the small bowling alley south of campus but not so big a crowd to create a stir.

These days, though, something's different. The Illini still bowl, only now they do it in bunches. Seeing five or six members of the country's No. 1 team together is a given, and the group is sometimes even bigger than that.

"You'd think with a group of guys that spend that much time together, that they'd argue sometimes," said Kevin Davis, a manager at Old Orchard. "They're not like that at all. They always seem like they're having fun."

That's because, well, they are. "A family. That pretty much sums it up, we're a big family," senior forward Roger Powell Jr. said. "We have fun together. We do a lot of things off the court and it shows that we fit together. I think that's why we've had success."

The Illini are in their 11th straight week at No. 1, the longest run since Kansas held the top spot for 15 weeks in 1996-97.

Illinois is the last unbeaten Division I team in the country at 26-0. The Illini are winning games by an average of 17.5 points, and have never trailed by double digits.

They've beaten seven Top 25 teams, including an 18-point rout of then-No. 1 Wake Forest that wasn't as close as the score indicated, and snapped Wisconsin's 38-game home winning streak that was the longest in the country.

Still, some people aren't quite sold. There's more talk about whether it's better for the Illini to lose a game before the NCAA tournament than their chances of becoming the first unbeaten team since the Indiana Hoosiers went 32-0 in 1975-76. Others wonder how Illinois' perfect record would hold up in the ACC.

"Everybody's waiting for us to lose, saying they think we're not the best team in the country," guard Dee Brown said. "Watch TV, they'll show you, they'll tell you. The No. 1 team? It's not us."

That's the beauty of the Illini, though. The reason Illinois is easy to overlook is the very thing that makes the team so special.

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Hokies shock Duke, handing No. 7 Blue Devils fourth ACC loss

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Patriots' Bruschi recovering after mild stroke

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Woods two behind Englishman Davis in Nissan Open

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